

IMPERIAL PARALLELS: ANALYZING THE U.S. ARMY REGIONALLY ALIGNED  
FORCE STRATEGY IN THE CONTEXT OF HISTORICAL IMPERIALISM

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by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

IMPERIAL PARALLELS: ANALYZING THE U.S. ARMY REGIONALLY ALIGNED FORCE STRATEGY IN THE CONTEXT OF HISTORICAL IMPERIALISM, by MAJ Kevin M. Ward, 94 pages.

In May of 2012, with budget and manpower cuts looming, General Ray Odierno announced his vision and strategy for the future Army. He highlighted a more capable, adaptable, and responsive force that would remain industriously engaged in a regionally aligned concept. The Regionally Aligned Force (RAF) Strategy provides each combatant commander with the ability to shape their environment through perpetually dedicated units that are culturally and geographically oriented. It intimates an army with an expanded global presence that is used to shape foreign nations for the benefit of national interests. In this light the strategy conveys a similar connotation to that of imperialism throughout history. This study seeks to answer if the RAF Strategy represents a modern version of imperialism, and therefore, if any historical lessons bear relevance to its execution in the modern information age. It focuses on the vanguard execution of the regionally aligned concept by Second Armored Brigade Combat Team, First Infantry Division in Africa and the Chinese employment of Dependency Theory in Africa, to assess the applicability of these historical lessons and evaluate the efficacy of the strategy.

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## ACRONYMS

AAR	After Action Review
ABCT	Armored Brigade Combat Team
AFRICOM	United States African Command
AOR	Area of Responsibility
ASCC	Army Service Component Command
AUSA	Association of the United States Army
CALL	Center for Army Lessons Learned
CCDR	Combatant Commander
CCMD	Combatant Command
CENTCOM	United States Central Command
CREL	Culture, Religious Expertise, Language Capability
CTC	Combat Training Center
DoD	Department of Defense
DoS	Department of State
DSCA	Defense Security Cooperation Agency
EXORD	Execution Order
FMF	Foreign Military Funding
FORSCOM	United States Forces Command
FOUO	For Official Use Only
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IOB	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department- Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization



NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
OECD/DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development- Development Assistance Committee
QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review
RAF	Regionally Aligned Force
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States
USARAF	United States Army Africa

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

I met a traveller from an antique land  
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:  
And on the pedestal these words appear:  
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

— Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Ozymandias*

#### Overview

On 6 April 1893, Andy Bowen stepped into a New Orleans boxing ring to face a challenger named Jack Burke. The gruesome bare-knuckle contest that followed would last over 7 hours and 111 rounds before the referee finally ended the match by declaring it a draw (*New York Times* 1893). In the course of the boxing match, which still stands as the longest in history, Jack Burke broke every bone in both of his hands without yielding. This analogous moment of epic contest provides an apt historical parallel to modern struggles. The United States (U.S.) Army, like Andy Bowen, finds itself at the end of its longest period of continuous combat against a broken but not defeated enemy. Despite the blood and sweat expended, the U.S. Army will likely leave the ring without a clear knockout victory. The historical similarities end here, for Andy Bowen did not leave the

ring with Jack Burke and then immediately fight three other fresh challengers with one hand behind his back.

Rather than a respite after a long and hard fight, the United States asked its Army to confront numerous present and yet to be realized global challenges while simultaneously cutting manpower and funding. The Army's answer to this quandary is the Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF) Strategy. This approach seeks to empower the regional combatant commanders by providing them assigned units with which they can shape their respective environments, empower partners and allies, combat current threats, and respond to emerging threats and natural disasters. The intent is to use U.S. Army forces to influence and develop the capabilities and outlooks of foreign nations in order to engender an end state that achieves greater alignment to interests shared with the U.S. No one can say with certainty how effective this strategy will be against the unknown threat environment of the future; however, the analysis of similar strategies throughout history can be harnessed to evaluate the suitability of the current RAF concept. These historical lessons can carry an ominous resonance in the present day; Andy Bowen died in the ring during his very next fight.

When searching for a historical basis of comparison for the RAF Strategy, classic imperialism carries an abundance of apparent and outward similarities. In its most general form, imperialism seeks the acquisition of power or influence over other countries through diplomacy or military force. There are centuries of lessons learned from these individual adventures in imperialism that can be useful in the modern application of the RAF Strategy. When considering the transitive efficacy of these

historical caveats and recommendations, the modern interconnected environment and separate objectives of the strategy must be considered.

At the time of this research, the RAF Strategy remains in its infancy. The Second Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT), First Infantry Division (2/1 ABCT), led the preliminary implementation and proof of concept during a recent deployment to the United States African Command (AFRICOM) area of responsibility (AOR). The experience of this vanguard unit enables the comparative evaluation of the applicability of historical imperial examples. An additional consideration in the analysis of this strategy is the comparison to alternative or similar efforts by other nations. China recently embarked on a variant of imperialism that ostensibly seems to follow some of the principles of the Dependency Theory. By analyzing the effect of historical lessons and modern alternatives to the RAF model, this research aims to identify valuable conclusions to leverage or avoid when translating this concept into reality.

#### Primary Research Question

The primary research question for this thesis asks, “Is the U.S. Army’s Regionally Aligned Force strategy a modern form of imperialism?” In a general sense there are many parallels between historic imperialism and the concept proposed by the RAF Strategy. A Therefore, a casual and unformed observer might come to the hasty conclusion that the RAF Strategy follows the historical model of imperialism. However, this research question is intended to provide an in-depth analysis of this issue for the edification of the reader which ensures that any conjecture on the subject is removed from the realms of superficiality.

### Secondary Research Questions

This study poses three secondary research questions. The first of these asks, “How does the RAF Strategy differ from competing forms of foreign policy, such as China’s actions and approach to Africa?” This question is intended to provide an added layer of depth to the analysis of the RAF Strategy. In an environment like Africa, which contains mutually beneficial strategic objectives as well as a competition over resources, assessing the strategic objectives and foreign policy approach of a competing nation, like China, illuminates the advantageous and disadvantageous aspects of the RAF Strategy. This question and its associated analysis also highlight potential sources of friction between national strategies.

Another secondary research question asks, “Given knowledge of historical precedent, competing forms of influence, and set evaluation criteria, will the RAF concept prove effective in the modern era?” This question is intended to evaluate the overall efficacy of the RAF Strategy. The conclusions generated by the research and analysis required of the previous research questions can then be used to inform this collective assessment of the RAF Strategy.

The final secondary research question asks, “What historical lessons of imperialism can be used to effect a successful implementation of the RAF Strategy?” Given the apparent parallels of the strategy to historical imperialism, this research question seeks to identify any salient points from past experiences that could have current applicability. The analysis associated with this question seeks to generate recommendations for consideration as the U.S. Army slowly implements this strategy across the force.

### Assumptions

Current practical application of the RAF Strategy is limited. Therefore, this thesis and the researcher assumes the available 2/1 ABCT unit after action review (AAR) and reports, are representative of the issues that any unit would have encountered implementing the RAF Strategy in Africa. In turn, it will be assumed that this operation was conducted within the guidelines and objectives of the RAF Strategy and can be considered representative of how future units will be employed under this banner.

### Definitions

Imperialism: The deliberate efforts of a government or an organization to directly or indirectly control the entirety of another nation's political, economic, or socio-cultural path; or aspects of these components in isolation or combination.

Dependency Theory: A historical condition which shapes a certain structure of the world economy such that it favors some countries to the detriment of others and limits the development possibilities of the subordinate economics...a situation in which the economy of a certain group of countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy, to which their own is subjected (Dos Santos 1971, 231).

Regionally Aligned Forces: Regionally Aligned Forces are those forces that provide the Combatant Commander (CCDR) with up to Joint-capable headquarters with scalable, tailorable capabilities to enable him to shape the environment. They are those Army units assigned to Combatant Commands (CCMDs), allocated to a CCMD, and those capabilities distributed and prepared by the Army for CCMD regional missions. This includes Army Total Force organizations and capabilities that are forward stationed, operating in a CCMD area of responsibility, supporting from outside the area of

responsibility, or prepared to support from outside the area of responsibility. Regional missions are driven by CCMD requirements. This requires an understanding of the cultures, geography, languages, and militaries of the countries where they are most likely to be employed, as well as expertise in how to impart military knowledge and skills to others (Campbell 2012, 5).

### Scope

This research focuses exclusively on the application of the RAF Strategy. Other U.S. foreign policy approaches, strategies of the other U.S. military branches, and interagency strategies will only be addressed within the narrow scope of how they affect the RAF Strategy. Any recommendations regarding the execution of the RAF Strategy will be within the same confines and guidance under which the RAF concept was created and directed to operate. In-depth analysis of historical examples of imperialism will be limited to European imperialism in Africa, British imperialism in India, and American Imperialism in the Philippines. Within this context, this thesis will seek to focus on the role of the military in each historical example.

### Limitations

Time is a limiting factor for this thesis. Given that there has been only one deployment under the RAF concept, conclusions regarding the actual execution of the concept will be limited to that singular deployment. There is limited time in which to conduct interviews, therefore AARs and media interviews will be used to assess leader outlooks and opinions.



### Delimitations

Much of the current material on the RAF Strategy is classified as “For Official Use Only” (FOUO). As a part of a comprehensive research process, FOUO material was thoroughly analyzed and used to inform potential conclusions. However, FOUO material was not used in presentation of this report.

### Conclusion

Despite a long and costly war, the United States remains uniquely positioned to maintain an aggressive global pursuit to secure its national interests. Following a decade of war-driven polarization, the RAF Strategy seeks to enable a global resurgence of U.S. military partnership and presence. Regardless of motivation or objectives, it appears that the U.S. is walking down a perilous path which empires have stumbled upon before. This research explores the implications of history on the current RAF Strategy in order to assess aspects of its effectiveness and provide recommendations that optimize its execution.

The literature review within chapter 2 assess existing academic works of significance to this topic and how they pertain to the specified objectives of this thesis. The body of work will be assessed in four categories: historic imperialism and foreign policy, U.S. Foreign Policy and militarism since the Cold War, the RAF Strategy, and Chinese foreign policy in Africa. Clarification of the chosen research methodology will be provided in chapter 3. The remaining chapters examine the body of research and present conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Take up the White Man's burden—  
In patience to abide,  
To veil the threat of terror  
And check the show of pride;  
By open speech and simple,  
An hundred times made plain  
To seek another's profit,  
And work another's gain.

Take up the White Man's burden—  
The savage wars of peace—  
Fill full the mouth of Famine  
And when your goal is nearest  
The end for others sought,  
Watch sloth and heathen Folly  
Bring all your hopes to nought.

— Rudyard Kipling, *White Man's Burden*

#### Introduction

The design of the future often borrows from the lessons of the past. The U.S. Army expended copious amounts of energy to ensure that the RAF Strategy is best method by which to cut a path through uncertainty towards a desired end state. Many past titans of history sought to blaze a similar trail, and their example can highlight some of the hazards that frequent that common ground. This research seeks to answer whether or not the RAF Strategy enables a modern form of imperialism, and given this historical context, if there are any applicable caveats or guidelines that optimize its execution.

The intended historical and modern vantage points sought in this research were selected due to their understated proximate relevance and a lack of pre-existing analysis.

This study requires an in-depth analysis of several topics in order to assemble cohesive conclusions in a new subject area. Although a wealth of literature exists regarding the history and recent application of foreign policy and imperialism, there is little analysis regarding how the global community will perceive and react to the RAF Strategy. In order to provide a thorough and well-rounded analysis on the subject, this study will examine the existing scholarly work in four major categories. The first relates to historic imperialism and foreign policy, which establishes a base upon which to make modern comparisons. The second category of literature pertains to U.S. foreign policy and militarism since the Cold War, which brings the analysis into modern relevance. This modern examination then leads to a third category of materials that pertain directly to the RAF concept itself. The fourth and final category of this research pertains to the Chinese foreign policies in Africa, which will provide a modern equivalent by which the RAF Strategy can be analyzed and assessed.

#### Historic Imperialism and U.S. Foreign Policy

In order to answer the primary research question, this study must establish a firm understanding of the fundamental aspects of imperialism throughout history. The representative body of work in this area is extensive. In order to restrict the focus and produce relevant conclusions, this study will concentrate research on only a few examples that are representative of the historical concept. While pertinent lessons will be drawn from all historical examples, European imperialism in Africa, British imperialism in India, and American imperialism in the Philippines provide the best cases for in-depth analysis and comparison. The body of work assessed in this category is best organized

into two subsections: general histories of imperialism and foreign policy, and histories of U.S. imperialism and foreign policy.

### General History of Imperialism and Foreign Policy

This group of work provides the intellectual basis with which to understand the full dimensions of historic imperialism. Alejandro Colás' *Empire* provides a comprehensive analysis of the concepts of imperialism, hegemony, and empire. This does not focus on any one imperial or hegemonic power through history, but rather seeks to provide an understanding regarding what exactly defines an empire or hyper-dominant world power. Colás examines the mechanisms that are essential to the establishment, rise, and endurance of an empire, and reinforces these concepts with historical examples. For these reasons Colás' work provides the critical analysis needed to understand and link the common themes of imperialism throughout history, from ancient Rome to modern times.

In *Power Over Peoples*, Daniel R. Headrick provides an excellent and comprehensive analysis of western imperialism starting with the conquest of the new world. He postulates that a comprehensive study of western imperialism is best viewed from three lenses: technology, geography, and disease. From these vantage points he is able to elucidate the manner in which corresponding relative advantages in these areas yielded success throughout six centuries. He also provides many examples of failures in this conquest when the imperial power experienced a disadvantage in these same areas. Contrary to the popular impression of the disproportionately powerful European power that is able to conquer civilizations with ease, Headrick correctly identifies several imperial powers that were held at bay for centuries because their might was unable to conquer geography or disease. Finally, *Power Over Peoples* identifies the fatal

characteristics of historical empires that lost a grip on their relative advantages over native people due to imperial overextension or lapses in advancement.

Amy Chua explores the concepts of “hyerpowers” in her book *Day of Empire*. She defines “hyerpowers” as those countries that leveraged their complete domination in all global aspects of military, economic, and cultural strength in order to create an existence devoid of any legitimate challengers. Her analysis focuses on the reasons for these powers ascent to historic levels of world power, as well as their eventual downfall. She concludes that the common, unifying aspect to the success of all of these world powers was their remarkable tolerance and acceptance of the varied cultures over which they ruled. She reinforces her thesis by pointing out many burgeoning hyperpowers that fell short due to their cultural and racial intolerance. In explaining the demise of empires, she proposes that a lack of a unifying “glue” slowly led to internal tensions, factions, and intolerance. *Day of Empire* provides a compelling argument for the importance of cultural understanding over military might in advancing or maintaining one’s status as a world power.

In *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire*, Piers Brendon provides the authoritative analysis of British exploits and conquests from their loss of the American Colonies in 1781 to the relinquishment of Hong Kong in 1997. Brendon pairs historical fact with objective analysis. He does not seek to bend history to his theory, but rather presents a comprehensive overview of each region of British dominance during their imperial golden age. His detailed analysis is critical to the understanding of individual historic events that can be used to provide a ready lesson learned to those who seek to tread upon the same imperial path established by the British. His work provides a

testament to the greatness that was Britain during the age of Queen Victoria, while also illuminating the inanity of its own practices.

*Imperialism: A Study*, by J.A. Hobson provides a unique perspective to this body of research. His work provides a historical view into the concept of imperialism, written at the height of the British Empire in 1902. The study implies there was a growing conflict regarding the moral correctness of the practice of imperialism and global opinion, even within the great British Empire, started to waiver on the notion of a righteous endeavor to bring civilization to those still requiring its evolutionary need. Therefore, Mr. Hobson's work provides a first-hand account of the perceptions and viewpoints regarding imperialism, and is an extremely beneficial and thoughtful insight into this aptly placed historical mindset.

#### History of United States Imperialism and Foreign Policy

This sub-category occurs during the same historical time-frame as the previous category of research, but it establishes a unique American identity within the historical context that is pertinent to the objectives of this research. Due to their status as a former colony and subjugated state of an imperial power, Americans by in large have always viewed the term "imperialism" with some contempt. As the U.S. gained status as a world power, they were hesitant to use imperialism to describe their conquests in Latin America and the Eastern Pacific Islands. Instead they espoused the belief that America held the special purpose to spread liberty and democracy to the world, and rested upon the more noble status as a hegemon. This self-perception as a global leader through cooperation instead of an imperial force by means of coercion remains to this day

In *The Folly of Empire*, John B. Judis presents a disparaging view of American imperialism at the dawn of the Twentieth Century. The thesis of his work firmly asserts that the model of Liberalism championed by Woodrow Wilson should serve as a basis for modern international relations. He tells the story of Theodore Roosevelt who initially advocated progressive policies of imperialism but later repented and expressed regret for his role in instigating the U.S. presence in the Philippines. Judis staunchly opposes unilateral action by the U.S. and argues that international conflict is self-defeating unless the U.S. is at the helm of a multilateral organization. He brings his argument to the modern era by espousing the benefits and success of the United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) while highlighting the shortcomings in conflicts that did not exemplify “Wilsonian” ideals, such as the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Judis is clearly slanted towards a liberal argument and does not address many of the obvious shortcomings realized in “Wilsonian” multilateral organizations such as the UN and NATO. However, he provides extremely compelling and well-argued points that should be a factor in any consideration of current foreign relations.

Jeremy Kuzmarov provides an excellent in-depth analysis of the tactic of using proxy security forces to support U.S. interests, in his work *Modernizing Repression*. He highlights the U.S. approach to manipulating foreign countries for the benefit its own interests with remarkable frequency through history. His account starts with the U.S. use of native Philippine proxy security forces to suppress guerilla activities in the early 1900s, and follows a path through the expanded use of proxy forces during the Cold War to the current War on Terror. He argues that the U.S. relies heavily upon this method because it hides the American hand and allows some degree plausible denial. He goes on

to argue that in general, the U.S. is short sighted in the partners it selects and groups it chooses to arm. He finds that for the most part, the U.S. employment of proxy security forces has been detrimental to the people of each respective nation as well as the long-term interests of the United States. As such, Kuzmarov provides several salient points that should be considered when embarking upon an endeavor to improve the security capacity of a foreign nation. However, it should also be noted that because his arguments are largely polarized, he fails to offer examples of some of the historically beneficial efforts to improve security forces, nor does he offer an explanation for the differences between those successes and the many other notable failures.

#### United States Post Cold War Foreign Policy and Militarism

The end of the Cold War marks a significant shift in America's role in the world. For the first time the U.S. became not just a dominant power, but the sole superpower. This change in status was accompanied by a corresponding shift in foreign policy and military engagements. Due to demands of less capable global partners, the U.S. assumed its role as the "world's policeman". Therefore, the U.S. pursued policies of conflict prevention and when required, engaged in small-scale conflicts to prevent their further escalation. Ultimately, the events of September 11, 2001 led to a more subtle shift in U.S. foreign policy; it still pursued preventative measures but also sought more preemptive operations without a robust international consensus. A primary example of this change was demonstrated during the invasion of Iraq in 2003 that marked the decisive split in international support for U.S. leadership and its policy decisions. This autonomous action spawned a slew of literature professing the following viewpoint: the United States is an



imperialist empire that uses its military might to impose formal imperialism and institute changes to sovereign nations to make them more amenable to U.S. interests.

A contemporary work entitled *Leashing the Dogs of War* as edited by Chester Crocker, Fen Hampson, and Pamela Aall, provides a perspective on international conflict and varied perspectives regarding how best to manage or prevent it at the local, regional, or global level. The Work is organized as a compilation of numerous sub works presented by the foremost experts of strategic policy and international relations. While the individual writings may be slanted towards a particular group of thought, the editors present many opposing arguments by other authors to allow the reader to establish their own conclusions. Of particular note to this research, Kimberly Martin in her work “Is Stability the Answer?” invests significant effort in analyzing the comparison of modern peacekeeping operations to imperialism.

Gabriel Kolko provides a harsh critique of U.S. foreign policy in his book *Another Century of War?* In it he strongly argues against what he describes as the U.S. interventionist mentality. He believes that the U.S. resorts to using its military much too quickly when the appropriate channel should be diplomacy. He argues that the U.S. military should close overseas bases, rescind its global presence, and leave the rest of the world to its own devices. Mr. Kolko presents an unapologetically one-sided argument that at times seems to approach proffering conspiratory views. However, within his writing he provides some profound and provoking viewpoints. Since these viewpoints challenge the majority of thought regarding the global role of the U.S. military, Kolko’s argument should be considered when debating strategic military policy.

Within the theme of modern American Imperialism, one of the works that proved most beneficial to subject of this research was Cullen Murphy's *Are We Rome?* Mr. Murphy analyzes the current American foreign policy and its ongoing actions throughout the globe, and then makes the direct comparison to aspects of the Roman Empire. Mr. Murphy argues that the current U.S. global disposition and international policy outlook bears a stark resemblance to Rome on the basis of six factors: a sense of U.S. exceptionalism, the use and role of its dominant military power, the corruption of public responsibility by private interests, the blatant ethnocentric and egotistic outlook of most Americans. A pursuit of American influence beyond the military's ability to handle, and the reality that American "imperialism" is too complex and unmanageable. Of particular note to the parameters of this research, Cullen states that the U.S. military is "too large to be affordable and too small to do everything it is asked to do." In general, Cullen's work produces a cautionary theme without resorting to views that lean too strongly towards a particular side.

#### RAF Concept

The RAF Strategy was announced less than two years prior to the conduct of this thesis. There is relatively limited academic discussion and publications concerning the implications of the strategy. Brigadier General Kimberly Field, Colonel James Learmont, and Lieutenant Colonel Jason Charland published a short but informative analysis of how the RAF Strategy differs from previous military strategies. This analysis provides a very good overview of the concept to the uninformed, and makes note of the distinctive differences between the RAF and former strategies. The writing analyzes the parameters in which regionally aligned forces might be used, and assesses some of the potential

costs. The authors clearly emphasize the strategy's potential benefits, but this is to be expected as they were all members of the Army G-3/5/7 that pioneered the plan. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this research it is useful to have a concise, unclassified overview document from the strategy's authors.

Steve Griffin provides another brief overview of the regionally aligned concept in his article, "Regionally-Aligned Brigades: There's More to This Plan Than Meets the Eye." He provides his perspective regarding not just the benefits but also some potential problems. This vantage point is useful because there are not many other professional products that identify potential problems and issues with the RAF Strategy. Griffen foresees problems with the integration of enablers, the inability of the personnel system to prevent attrition of regional expertise, the potential for the return to a tiered system within the general purpose force, and the lack of a clearly defined mission and training focus for each regional alignment. As recent as the concept of regional alignment is, some of the subjects that Mr. Griffin wrote upon are already out of date. Some of the salient concerns he raised were addressed by the U.S. Army when it updated its concept from "Regionally Aligned Brigades" to "Regionally Aligned Forces." Even so, Mr. Griffin's points contribute to an objective analysis of the strategy and continue to present some of the few published reservations about the strategy.

For awareness and understanding, this thesis reviewed and considered many documents on the RAF Strategy that were classified as For Official Use Only (FOUO); however, this report did not include any FOUO information. These documents included detailed plans regarding unit deployments under the RAF Strategy, lessons learned from RAF deployment activities, and related U.S. strategic policy goals and objectives. The

most beneficial documents were the Execution Order (EXORD) for RAF and 2/1 ABCT's interim lessons learned. The EXORD provided the exact guidance and parameters of the Regional Alignment construct and the intent of the Chief of Staff of the Army. The interim lessons learned document that detailed the 2/1 ABCT's pioneering deployment to AFRICOM under the RAF concept provided the opportunity to assess the impact of historical imperial themes upon the modern execution of the RAF Strategy.

### Chinese Foreign Policies in Africa

Africa appears to be the ideal location in which to employ and explore the RAF Strategy for the U.S. and the U.S. military. The African continent is vast in geography with a multitude of cultures, numerous emergent crises, regional instability, and transnational terror and extremist networks. This maelstrom of disastrous realities in Africa could potentially be mitigated by sustained military engagements designed to improve partner nation security capacity and promote regional stability, ultimately contributing to U.S. strategic policy in Africa. However, the U.S. is not the only nation making significant foreign policy strides in Africa.

For the last several decades, China established comprehensive trade agreements focused mainly upon the export of natural resources. These relationships have only grown and now encompass the majority of countries on the continent. Many accuse China of formulating a dependency relationship that creates a trade imbalance impossibly slanted toward their benefit at the detriment of their partner African nations. Others point to the substantial humanitarian aid provided by China and the trade benefits that, at least initially, seem to hold mutual benefit. The U.S. and China are the top two major powers that are economically active in Africa. Given the recent employment of 2/1 ABCT under

the RAF construct, Africa provides the opportune ground upon which to assess the role of the RAF Strategy within larger foreign policy objectives as compared to the foreign policy objectives of China.

Richard Behar authored a five part magazine article entitled “Special Report: China Storms Africa.” In it he provides a startling analysis of the rate at which China is virtually consuming Africa’s natural resources by looking at the case of four individual countries. Behar does not directly accuse China of initiating a Dependency Theory relationship with individual African countries, but he does indicate a less than beneficial long-term relationship for Africa. While Mr. Behar regards China’s Africa policies as aggressive, he does not hold a favorable opinion of the United States’ track record in Africa either. “China Storms Africa” provides an in-depth example of the dangers of unchecked economic aggression when combined with urgent economic needs.

Nkemjika E. Kalu sought to definitively answer if Chinese policies in Africa fit the mold of the Dependency Theory in his PhD Dissertation, *Understanding Africa’s China Policy*. He uses Nigeria as a case study and examines its relationship with China through existing trade relationships and aid exchanges. He concludes that the true determination of Dependency Theory will take a longer timeline to establish, but the initial indications are that the relationship is mutually beneficial to both countries’ economies. He cites the improved gross domestic product (GDP) of Nigeria and the vast humanitarian aid packages that China provides, neither of which are indicative of a dependency relationship.

*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon?*, as edited by Kweku Ampiah and Sanusha Naidu, contain a diverse collection of mostly African authors who analyze aspects of

China's economic relationship with various countries in Africa. The work proved valuable for the purposes of this research, because it provides an objective African perspective on not just China, but also the United States' goals in Africa. The book contains both perspectives regarding the current relationship with China- it holds the potential of the relationship to be very beneficial, or in contrast could be a harbinger of doom due to an unsustainable dependency of the relationship. The comparison of China to the United States from the African perspective is especially useful when assessing the effectiveness of the RAF Strategy in Africa.

### Conclusion

This study's primary research question, "Is the U.S. Army's Regionally Aligned Forces Strategy a modern form of imperialism?" contains no substantive scholarly works; however, individual aspects of the question contain a wealth of information. There is an abundance of excellent scholarly works pertaining to the general history of imperialism and foreign policy, as well as literature pertaining to U.S. foreign policy and militarism since the Cold War. Distinguished works from each category were selected to encompass varied and opposing viewpoints in order to generate a well-rounded assessment of all factors. The RAF Strategy itself is relatively new and carries an associated shortfall in existing scholarly analysis. The evaluation of this concept consisted mainly in assessing official U.S. Army documents to establish a firm understanding of the parameters of the strategy. Finally, opposing viewpoints regarding China's foreign policy in Africa were analyzed in order to provide a basis for comparison to the U.S. Army's RAF Strategy in Africa.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world  
Like a Colossus, and we petty men  
Walk under his huge legs and peep about  
To find ourselves dishonorable graves.

— William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*

#### Overview

This thesis seeks to answer the primary research question, “Is the U.S. Army’s Regionally Aligned Forces Strategy a modern form of imperialism?” The RAF Strategy represents a significant deviation in the operating concept of the U.S. Army following thirteen years of continued conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq. This research seeks to assess the effectiveness of the modern application of this strategy when considering the context of imperialism throughout history. This requires a comparison to historical examples as well as an analysis of the modern environment and competing forms of policy. By considering both historical and current precedents this analysis seeks to provide a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the RAF Strategy. To accomplish this objective, the research conducted consisted of an evaluation study through a qualitative analysis. This research and analysis enabled a cohesive comparison of historical imperialism, the conceptual design of the RAF Strategy, the reality of the RAF Strategy’s first operational implementation, and the competing foreign policy of China in Africa. With this basis of comparison established, the RAF Strategy and other correlated models of policy were assessed against set evaluation criteria. The research and subsequent analysis generated

conclusions and recommendations regarding ways to adjust, improve, and modify the RAF Strategy as the U.S. Army moves to implement it across the entire force.

### Data Collection and Analysis Methods

The primary method of data collection was an analysis of existing works. This study endeavored to undertake a substantial literature review of existing scholarly research, official briefings, military doctrine, and operation orders. The literature review separated works into four general categories: historic imperialism and U.S. foreign policy, U.S. foreign policy and militarism following the cold war, the RAF concept, and Chinese policy in Africa.

An analysis of historic imperialism and U.S. foreign policy revealed two sub-categories of scholarly work: a general history of imperialism and foreign policy, and a U.S. specific history of imperialism and foreign policy. In the first category, the research provided the basis for understanding the parameters and principles of imperialism. There are many nuances of imperialism, and a comprehensive understanding enabled the refinement of areas that pertained to the primary purpose of this thesis. In particular, the European practice of imperialism in Africa from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century as well as British imperialism in India provided salient points of understanding that could provide specific comparison to the RAF concept. The second historical category of research specifically provided illuminating insights into the U.S. approach to imperialism within the larger context of historical imperialism already established by the first group of work. This category revealed the roots of U.S. preference towards hegemony over empire, and proffered the historical example of U.S. imperialism



in the Philippines. This identified another historical case study specific to the U.S. experience upon which the RAF concept could be compared.

With the historical study of imperialism complete, this study then focused on modern interpretations of U.S. policy since the cold war. Scholarly works in this category focused on the U.S. foreign policy approach and goals following its emergence as the sole superpower after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This collection of references introduced the concept of preventative conflict and hegemonic influence, both of which have been exercised by the U.S. since the Cold War. Additionally, a large portion of the erudite literature in this collection argued that the U.S. revived the concept and practice of imperialism. The proponents of this view argue that the U.S. seeks to use its unmatched power to exploit resources and initiate political and social change in nations which do not align with our interests, as evidenced by the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Collectively, this category of research provided an understanding of the complex and often conflicting perspectives on recent and current U.S. foreign policy. Ultimately this category provided a comprehensive basis upon which to analyze the current implementation of the RAF Strategy.

When analyzing the RAF Strategy, this research sought to make the most of limited scholarly works and material. It relied heavily on official military documents and briefings. In order to understand the parameters and objectives of the strategy, research included the official execution orders as well as higher national strategies such as the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). This research, when combined with scholarly works concerning the post-cold war approach to foreign policy, provided the larger context in which the RAF Strategy operates. The effectiveness and experiences gained

during employment of the concept was then determined by the analysis of AARs from 2/1 ABCT, which conducted the pioneering operational deployment of the RAF concept in 2013. Additionally, the author reviewed additional AARs provided by the U.S. Army Africa for the same operation, as well as those from the First Armored Brigade Combat Team, Fourth Infantry Division (1/4 ABCT), which conducted a similar mission in the Middle East. This portion of the research revealed the operational extent of the RAF concept, as well as where its implementation fell short from its design, and where its implementation held encouraging success.

These three categories of research afforded in-depth knowledge of the parameters, forms, and characteristics of imperialism, pertinent historical examples, recent strategic approaches to U.S. foreign policy, an overview of the RAF concept, as well as an assessment of its initial implementation. The conclusions drawn from the subsequent analysis and comparison of these categories answered the primary research question for this thesis.

In order to further the intended benefit of the research, and deepen the analysis of the RAF Strategy, this thesis asked the secondary research question, “How does the RAF Strategy differ from competing forms of foreign policy, such as China’s actions and approach to Africa?” This required further research into China’s current strategic approach in Africa. This research proved difficult as China is notoriously guarded about publicizing their national strategy and intent in Africa. A popular train of thought is that China is following the principles of the Dependency Theory in Africa. To assess this theory, this study conducted further research into the principles of Dependency Theory. After gaining an appreciation for this concept, conflicting viewpoints could be analyzed

regarding whether or not the hand of Dependency Theory is evident and present within China's actions on the African continent. Some proponents argue that China is exploiting another nation's resources with an asymmetric personal benefit. Other proponents argue that China's actions provide mutual benefit as well as displayed characteristics that are uncharacteristic of the Dependency Theory. To ensure a broader and more objective assessment within this topic area, this study also researched independent points of analysis such as Chinese aid and development projects in Africa. This research provided an in-depth understanding of China's current foreign policy approach in Africa, which then could be compared to the current parameters of the RAF Strategy. The conclusions drawn from this comparison and analysis answered the aforementioned secondary research question.

To enable a comprehensive understanding of the RAF Strategy, an additional secondary research question asked, "Given knowledge of historical precedent, competing forms of influence, and set evaluation criteria, will the RAF Strategy prove effective in the modern era?" The main method by which this study endeavored to answer this question was to analyze the RAF Strategy and other national strategies through set evaluation criteria within the context of burgeoning near-term and established long-term operations. Given a common standard of assessment, the evaluation revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the RAF Strategy and how it compared to historical, alternative, and competitive approaches to foreign policy. The conclusions drawn from this evaluation answered the secondary research question regarding the effectiveness of the RAF concept in the modern era.

## Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria for this study needed to be capable of universal application to varied approaches to foreign policy, but still provide a unifying theme unique to these strategies. Aside from the RAF concept, the selected approaches to foreign policy selected for evaluation included an alternative strategy of limited engagement, China's competitive strategy in Africa, as well as the historically linked policy of British imperialism in the nineteenth century. This broad range of foreign policy approach can be tied together by the concept of foreign development. Since a primary objective of the RAF Strategy seeks to develop partner nation capabilities, this study used a modified form of the established development project evaluation criteria set by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development- Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC). The OECD/DAC evaluates a development program's efficiency, effectiveness, impact, relevance, and sustainability (IOB 2009, 17). To account for the specific evaluation of the RAF Strategy and other foreign policy in the modern age, this study also added the additional evaluation criteria of targeted partner assent and transparency. Each policy or strategy was assessed within the context of the following parameters for each individual evaluation criterion in accordance with the OECD/DAC:

Efficiency. "Efficiency measures how economically resources and the way they are applied are converted to direct results. . . It establishes the relationship between input and output and refers to a level of results that the implementer can check" (IOB 2009, 17).

Effectiveness. "Effectiveness [describes] the extent to which the direct results of [a strategy] contribute to the sustainable achievement of policy objectives. Policy

objectives are the objectives that [the strategies] intend to achieve. Efficiency and effectiveness refer to two successive levels in the results chain. A positive assessment at one level does not automatically imply a positive assessment at another.”

Impact. “[Impact] refers to the highest level of results. It defines to what extent, with the aid of outputs, the effects achieved (outcomes) contributed to broader, more far reaching objectives” (IOB 2009, 18).

Suitability/Relevance. “Relevance refers to the extent to which the effects of [strategies] make a sustainable contribution to achieving the ultimate objective” (IOB 2009, 19). Suitability/relevance describes whether the strategy is appropriate for the environment and circumstances of its application.

Sustainability. Sustainability describes the ability of the strategy to maintain the requisite effort and momentum required of that strategy over time. This accounts for increased demands, resource constraints, or other factors that may preclude the effectiveness of the strategy given the rigors of time.

This study also used the evaluation criteria of targeted partner assent and transparency. These were selected to provide specific clarifying context for the evaluation of foreign policy. While the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria provide a complete assessment of development projects, it does not address the complexity of foreign relations. These evaluation criteria were used in the following context:

Targeted Partner Assent. Targeted Partner Assent describes the degree to which the targeted group or partner nation is willing to comply or participate in the strategy and align with the corresponding national interests and objectives. A country or group that is eager to take part or facilitate the strategy displays a high degree of assent. A country or

group that cooperates with reservations would have an average degree of assent. A country or group that is unwilling to participate and comply with the strategy or requires forced participation holds a low degree of assent.

Transparency. Transparency describes the degree to which the foreign policy or strategy must hide or mask its true objectives. An associated implication of this concept is the degree to which a strategy or policy must deliberately deceive or preclude information from its intended partner. A strategy which engenders a completely open relationship with truthful and apparent objectives contains a high degree of transparency. A strategy that requires secretive or deceitful objectives to which a partner nation is not privileged contains a low degree of transparency.

This study assessed each policy or strategy through the analysis and applicability of each individual evaluation criterion. The result of this analysis produced the degree to which the strategy satisfied the requirements of that individual point of assessment. This degree of association was then portrayed through one of the affiliated categorizations of high, average, or low measure of applicability. The evaluation considered these individual policies over two periods of time: short-term and long-term. For the purposes of this evaluation, short-term is defined as the present to five years into the future. Long-term is defined as six to twenty years in the future.

The degree to which each policy meets the evaluation criteria will be represented by one of three possible outcomes: low, average, and high. A policy that meets an evaluation criterion to a high degree is one that clearly embodies the definition of the criterion and benefits from that individual aspect. A policy that achieves a rating of high in sustainability, as required by the definition, is capable of maintaining its effort and

momentum over time despite forecasted resource constraints and logistical limitations. A policy that meets an evaluation criterion to a low degree is one that fails to achieve any measureable embodiment of the criterion definition. Even if a policy holds small components that meet the criterion definition, if the overwhelming aspects of the policy fail to achieve or directly counter the criterion definition, then it would still be considered a rank of low. A policy that holds a low rating for efficiency would demonstrate limited benefits from enormous costs. A policy that achieves an average rating for an individual evaluation criterion is one that achieves the criterion definition to a satisfactory degree, but does not embody it in all aspects. The method for recording these results is the following table:

Table 1. Format for Short-Term and Long-Term Foreign Policy Evaluation

	Short-Term				Long-Term			
	RAF	Limited Engagement	China in Africa	Imperial Britain	RAF	Limited Engagement	China in Africa	Imperial Britain
Efficiency								
Effectiveness								
Impact								
Relevance								
Sustainability								
Target Assent								
Transparency								

Source: Created by the author

This evaluation assessed the efficacy of the RAF Strategy in the modern era. It enabled a detailed assessment and explanation of the degree to which the RAF Strategy fulfilled the criteria. The evaluation of the other strategies provided a well-rounded basis

of comparison for the RAF Strategy. The limited engagement strategy represents a logical alternative that the U.S. Army would use instead of the RAF Strategy. China's policy in Africa represents a competing foreign policy to that of the U.S., enacted in a contested environment that holds mutual strategic objectives and interests. The foreign policy adopted by Britain in the execution of imperialism in the nineteenth century is no longer a viable form of policy in the modern era, but was assessed as if in modern application in order to further explore the comparison between the RAF Strategy and imperialism.

### Recommendations

Chapter 5 of this study presents recommendations and conclusions and serves as the appropriate place in which to address the final secondary research question, "What historical lessons of imperialism can be used to effect a successful implementation of the RAF Strategy?" The research of various forms of imperialism through history, and the intended construct and application of the RAF Strategy, created several parallels that remain pertinent no matter the historical date. Many of these salient recommendations of effectiveness and caveats of danger were addressed by the authors of the RAF Strategy; however, some require either further emphasis or illumination to prevent any unfortunate shortcomings.

This study concludes with final recommendations for further research on the subject. It also addresses any originally intended objectives of the study that the research was unable to adequately satisfy.



## Conclusion

This thesis tackles an audacious subject that necessitates a large degree of research over many varied subjects in order to produce a coherent answer to its primary and secondary research questions. This chapter explained the research methodology employed to produce discernible answers to these questions and other conclusions. Chapter 3 provided an overview of the categories of research as well as the exact evaluation criteria used to assess the RAF Strategy and other forms of foreign policy. Finally, this chapter described the methods used to generate overarching conclusions regarding the strategy's implementation. The next chapter presents the data and relevant information gained from the research as well as its analysis in support of the primary and secondary research questions.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Rise like Lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number —  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in your sleep had fallen on you—  
Ye are many— they are few.

— Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Mask of Anarchy*

#### Introduction

This study seeks to answer the question, “Is the U.S. Regionally Aligned Forces Strategy a modern form of imperialism?” To answer this question, the analysis required extensive research into forms of historical imperialism. This research established an understanding of the characteristics and principles of imperialism and enabled a depth of understanding that afforded an appropriate comparison of the RAF Strategy in an effort to answer the primary research question. This breadth of understanding enabled a focused development of the specific categories and historical examples of imperialism that would be the most pertinent basis for comparisons to the U.S. Army’s current approach to global engagement. To ensure an accurate comparison, extensive research was also required to understand the objectives and parameters of the RAF Strategy. This study looked at governing documents, official briefs, as well as AARs from the units that provided the proof of concept in the vanguard operational execution of the concept. Regardless of whether or not the RAF Strategy is considered a form of imperialism, this study sought to analyze its modern efficacy. To do this it also analyzed China’s foreign policy approach

in Africa in order to provide a basis of comparison for the RAF Strategy which was recently executed for the first time in Africa as well.

This chapter will present the findings of this research. Additionally, it will seek to link the examination of historical imperialism, the parameters of the RAF Strategy, and elements of China's approach in Africa in order to generate relevant points of analysis from which definitive conclusions can be made. One of the primary methods of linking these separate areas of research will be evaluating each policy or strategy by the same set of criteria.

Should the concept of regionally aligned forces prove advantageous to the United States, the RAF Strategy represents a significant departure to the U.S. Army's approach to the peace time world. Although the RAF Strategy still strives to prevent large-scale conflict, it simultaneously and proactively seeks preventative measures through engagement of partner nations rather than reactionary engagements of limited scale. This new approach to global U.S. military engagement activities requires a significant shift in individual unit approaches to training and mission preparation. The RAF Strategy represents the Army's best attempt to not just prepare for an unknown future, but contribute to the proactive shaping, realization, and obtainment of a desired future.

### Results of Research

#### Background: Characteristics of Imperialism

The predominant societal notion of imperialism carries a very negative connotation and engenders visions of aristocratic elite that use superior technology to suppress and exploit a native population. Although this might be accurate for a few pages of history, imperialism can take many forms and methods of implementation. Professor

Paul Schroeder aggressively defines imperialism as the “exercise of final authority and decision-making power by one government over another government foreign to itself” (Schroeder 2014). Donald Meinig takes a softer approach defining it simply as, “The aggressive encroachment of one people upon the territory of another resulting in the subjugation of that people to alien rule” (Meinig 1982, 71). After review of these viewpoints as well as an expansive breadth of other viewpoints on this topic, this study defines imperialism as the deliberate efforts of a government or an organization to directly or indirectly control the entirety of another nation’s political, economic, or socio-cultural path; or aspects of these components in isolation or combination.

Centuries of this practice can be sorted and distilled into two general categories of imperialism, formal and informal (Knight 2008, 24). Formal imperialism is the clearest form of the subjugation by a dominating power because it imposes direct control. French imperialism tended to be more formal; in 1830 they conquered Algeria by military force and installed French Governor-Generals to administer direct French political rule (Headrick 2010, 163-164). In general, formal imperialism uses overwhelming military force to achieve and enforce direct rule. Often, this form of imperialism meets its end in the form of a native insurrection, as was the case in French Indochina.

Informal imperialism does not carry the same evident demarcations of formal imperialism as it is often intended to hide the hand of the dominant power and mask the negative connotations of imperialism. This approach is exercised through indirect control; the dominant power rules in “cahoots” with the native “collaborating elites,” and a system of governance is established which is normally favorable to the dominant power (Knight 2008, 25). Great Britain generally observed such informal imperialism at the

apex of their empire in the Nineteenth Century. In India, the British executed control and governance of the Raj by delegating political power through 950 European officials to wide range of indigenous rulers (Colás 2007, 92). To further hide the impression of bitter subjugation, informal imperialism often utilizes native military and police forces to achieve and enforce political rule. In the case of India, Britain secured the entirety of the Raj with 50,000 mostly native Sepoys (Colás 2007, 92).

In either case, these forms of imperialism are employed to directly support and achieve national interests. Alan Knight broadly categorizes the purposes of imperialism in the interests of national objectives as being “engineering” and “defense” (Knight 2008, 24). “Engineering” imperialism seeks shape the subjugated country for a sole or mutual benefit to national interests, whereas “defense” imperialism seeks to deter or defeat competing powers or threats (Knight 2008, 27). These objectives are achieved by manipulating the political, economic, and socio-cultural realms. Most historical imperialism balanced efforts across all three categories, with individual emphasis as required; however, there are several instances where a country’s imperialist conquest was restricted to only one category.

Following the First Opium War from 1839-1842, Britain was able to “extort a colossal indemnity” from China and gain a “favored trade status” giving it a virtual monopoly on economic trade in the region (Brendon 2008, 106). Often imperialism was proactively sought solely for economic reasons because the imperial powers believed that the “resources of the tropics will not be developed voluntarily by the natives themselves” (Hobson 1902, 239). Liberia granted the Firestone Rubber Company a 99-year lease on one million acres of land for the purposes of a rubber plantation, thereby effectively

awarding a private corporation a monopoly over their ability to create agrarian exports (Berkeley 1992, 58).

Traditionally, conquests in imperialism embarked upon cultural changes within a subjugated nation in order to try to achieve long-term stability and an enduring and complimentary relationship. Great Britain expended enormous efforts to instill British culture in India, as seen by their investment in native education. By 1897, British education programs resulted in nearly 300,000 native Indians studying the English language which further increased to 500,000 by 1907 (Chua 2007, 221). The emergence of liberalism, progressivism, and social Darwinism in the nineteenth century provided another platform upon which to launch imperialism. Many took Rudyard Kipling's poem, "White Man's Burden," and used it to champion the social advancement less advanced peoples instead of using to warn against the dangers of imperialism as the poem was originally intended. This class of society justified aggressive imperialism on the grounds that "it was working with the evolutionary grain" (Brendon 2008, 152).

Although countries such as Britain were proud of their status as an imperial power, the U.S. has always been resistant to the moniker. Due largely to their status as a former colony, the U.S. prefers a status of a hegemonic global leader that, as Thomas Jefferson stated, will "forge an empire of liberty" rather than an oppressive imperial power (Judis 2004, 14). This delineation created enduring debates concerning the differences between a hegemonic and imperial power. Historian Paul Schroeder argues that, "Hegemony means clear, acknowledged leadership. . . a hegemon is first among equals; an imperial power rules over subordinates" (Schroeder 2003). This hegemonic concept of global leadership is reinforced by Joseph Nye who argues that hegemony can

be differentiated from imperialism because the latter requires formal political control (Nye 2004). Robert Kagan is less apt to make such a clear distinction when considering America's global role: "The U.S. can be a benevolent hegemon, which requires incorporating aspects of imperialism" (Kagan 1998, 26). Alejandro Colás also argues that there are few differences: "both empire and hegemony combine coercion and consent in different measure, although hegemony veers towards the latter and empire towards the former" (Colás 2007, 166).

This debate reached an apex of intensity following the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Intellectual debate was saturated with declarations of American imperialism. Scholars debated whether the U.S. was a hegemony or empire based largely along partisan, liberal, and neoconservative lines. This research concludes that debating the difference between hegemony and imperialism is an inane exercise that holds little worth because it is a distinction that only matters to the dominant power. From the perspective of the lesser nation, both a hegemonic and imperial power impose their will through might or force leaving those without the means to counter no option but to capitulate. Both a hegemon and imperial power use their superior strength to manipulate those with less strength. Therefore, the modern distinction and title of a hegemonic power will still bear many of the trademarks and characteristics of classic imperial powers.

#### Primary Research Question

This study seeks to answer if the new Regionally Aligned Force strategy adopted by the United States is a modern form of imperialism. The results of this research indicate that the RAF Strategy is not a tool of formal imperialism, but rather a customized instrument for a new variety of informal imperialism, the object of which is the power to

influence rather than physical control over governments and resources. Through this power of influence that is enabled by the RAF Strategy, the U.S. seeks to indirectly maintain some form of regional control in its foreign policy objectives.

The U.S. Army defines Regionally Aligned Forces as “those forces that provide the Combatant Commander (CCDR) with up to Joint-capable headquarters with scalable, tailorable capabilities to enable him to shape the environment” (Campbell 2012, 4). Regionally aligned forces function as part of the Army’s larger vision to “prevent, shape, and win” globally (Campbell 2012, 3). The primary objective of the RAF Strategy is to enable the CCDRs to influence and manipulate their respective areas of operation. This directly empowers this new form of indirect imperialism which seeks to mold the foreign policy and economic actions of other nations not through force, but rather through persuasion and influence. To achieve these ends, the U.S. does not rely upon the remnants of its hegemonic power, but rather creates allies, proxies, and agreements to compel cooperation for the benefit of U.S. national interests. The RAF strategy does not enable or seek direct U.S. political or economic control, but rather creates the conditions that necessitate collaboration.

The strategy is purposely broad in order to enable the U.S. Army to remain adaptive and ready to execute decisive action, emergent contingency operations, and security cooperation activities (Campbell 2012, 8). This commitment to flexibility amongst a broad range of operations also enables foreign policy objectives to shift between “engineering” and “defense” purposes as required by the geographical location and conditions. Although coercion and influence are the primary method of engagement highlighted by the RAF Strategy, the multi-layered competencies it obliges enable an



expedient transition to traditional elements of formal imperialism. The increased engagement permitted by the RAF Strategy provides increased operational access as well as readily available and dedicated forces that are capable of conducting conventional decisive action operations as required.

Despite this capability to support direct imperialism, the strategy primarily enables the indirect style of imperialism and holds many parallels to historical examples, such as the use of proxy forces. One of the pillars of the Department of Defense (DoD) strategy presented in the 2014 QDR is to “build security globally in order to preserve regional stability, deter adversaries, support allies and partners, and cooperate with others to address common security challenges.” (DoD 2014, v) A key component of this pillar is aggressively training and mentoring native forces to enable them to autonomously provide both internal and regional security (DoD 2014, 16-19). Although this approach provides mutual benefit, the primary U.S. objective is to use foreign forces to enable regional security for the benefit of U.S. interests. This use of proxy forces is a common theme in the historical application of informal imperialism approaches.

Consistent with this approach, the RAF Strategy increases the capacity of the U.S. government to train foreign military and police forces through Title 22 and Foreign Military Funding (FMF) programs. The strategy accomplishes this by allocating dedicated units to this mission that can be used at the discretion of the CCDR. Prior to the RAF Strategy, training foreign forces was primarily a role given to the U.S. Special Forces. Due to their small size and other competing demands, U.S. Special Forces had a limited capacity to adequately engage and train foreign forces globally. The RAF Strategy exponentially increases the U.S. military’s rate and capacity to train indigenous

forces, as evidenced by the experience of the first unit to conduct operations under the RAF construct. 2/1 ABCT aligned with AFRICOM, and during their initial eight months, the brigade conducted over 70 training operations with foreign militaries in over 30 countries (McHugh 2014, 9). From most points of view, the implementation of the strategy was remarkably successful whereas 2/1 ABCT planned over 80 operations (both Title 22 activities and joint exercises) and eventually executed over 70 of them (U.S. Army G-3/5/7 2013).

General Martin Dempsey highlights in the 2014 QDR that reductions in U.S. military capacity necessitate a heavier reliance on partner militaries to achieve global security (DoD 2014, 63). This is not the first time that a dominant power relied upon foreign forces to mold regional effects. The British famously used native “Sepoys” to enforce peace and governance in India. Originally formed in the early 1750s, Indian Sepoys provided Britain with a force that could provide both internal security and regional expeditionary capacity for nearly 200 years until Indian independence in 1947 (Brendon 2008, 33-34, 36, 413). They largely achieved their success because the British deliberately invested in their development through continued armament improvements, drill and instruction, and mentorship (Brendon 2008, 33-36). The U.S. drew directly from the British example in India when it sought to establish local security and suppress a counterinsurgency in the Philippines following its acquisition after the Spanish-American War in 1898 (Kuzmarov 2012, 21-22). Unfortunately, the U.S. sought to remake the Philippines in their own image, and invested significant capital in their security forces to do so. Despite establishing a national police school, counter-guerilla instruction, modern weaponry, new headquarters, new correctional facilities, and a re-vamped judicial

system, the U.S. did not achieve the same measure of success seen in the British Raj (Kuzmarov 2012, 21-23).

One of the fundamentals of the RAF Strategy is that it seeks to build partnerships, create enduring alliances, and generate agreements. As the U.S. Army's RAF talking points elucidate, "[RAF] strengthen U.S. partnerships with other nations. Fostered through enduring engagements and positive interaction, regionally-aligned forces provide influence in and access to host nations" (Snow 2013, 2). The U.S. establishes these partnerships in order to advance U.S. national interests within that country. Most often these partnerships seek to improve internal security in order to open and nurture global markets and fight terrorism. However, when it coincides to the benefit of the U.S.'s larger interests, they will act as a protectorate for these partnered nations and will help to establish and defend their regional rights and interests. This was the case when the U.S. stated as recently as 24 April 2014 that it would defend Japan's territorial rights in the East China Sea against China if necessary (McCurry 2014).

Imperialist powers most often used this protectorate relationship to achieve or protect regional influence and economic advantages without being encumbered by the responsibilities of the governance. Britain used protectorates to a great extent throughout its history, and seemed to gravitate towards this convention near the end of the twentieth century as it became increasingly difficult to sustain their massive, global, empire. Using the protectorate approach allowed Britain to retain critical benefits to their regional interests without the heavy encumbrances of a more involved imperialism or colonialism. Historical examples include Britain's declaration of Uganda as a protectorate in 1894 in order to protect critical rail lines and trade transport routes (Brendon 2008, 207). Another

example occurred in 1878 Britain established Cyprus as a protectorate in order to bolster its maritime presence in the Mediterranean Sea and ensure the security of the Suez Canal (Brendon 2008, 617-618).

In contrast, the U.S. may create operational access to foreign territories from potential protectorate relationships formed on the back of the RAF Strategy. Once established, these relationships could allow the U.S. to shape entire regions and aspects of the social structure and culture within these territories. Importantly, the U.S., especially after its experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, is careful to respect sacred cultural and religious beliefs; however, it promotes democracy and universal human values and rights in all of its endeavors. General Dempsey cites the “preservation and extension of universal values” as one of the six national security interests for which DoD is directly responsible (DoD 2014, 60). While appealing to these universal values will likely create less global conflict, it requires a deliberate effort to alter existing cultures that do not necessarily abide by these “universal” values in practice.

The RAF Strategy will serve as one of the primary vehicles through which the U.S. seeks to accomplish this task. The increased operational access that is obtained from a growth in engagements and partnerships built by regionally aligned forces also provides the greatest opportunity to influence and understand cultural nuances. Additionally, the RAF Strategy is well suited to respond to provide humanitarian aid and disaster response, which provides a vital transmission of the appeal to universal values. This also supports the third pillar of the DoD strategy outlined in the 2014 QDR which requires the projection of power to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (DoD 2014, v).

The RAF Strategy provides CCDRs the access and forces needed to accomplish this cultural appeal, but once again parallels a very common aspect of historical imperialism.

Several imperial empires justified their conquests as a humanitarian endeavor. British imperialism in India followed the theme of Social Darwinism in the second half of the nineteenth century (Brendon 2008, 152-155). A Sepoy mutiny caused the British to realize that they created and enforced these cultural alterations without any consideration for the native beliefs. The British Crown recognized its fault in “tampering with religion” and instead sought a carefully controlled cultural path which painstakingly made accommodations for native beliefs and practices, but still appealed to more universal values (Chua 2007, 219-221). This respect for the cultures of a native group actually appealed to the British in India, for their colonial system demanded categories and classes rather than comingled confusion. This demand for order led to their practice of “Nativism” in Africa. The sheer number of tribes, British citizens, British settlers, and combinations therein, left the social order in most of British Africa very confused (Colás 2007, 137). In its quest to create social order, the British researched the culture and history of various tribes and generated stereotypes to provide a sense of identity for these groups. Following this, they essentially re-cast entire groups of people to fit these stereotypes and fall within an acceptable group in the newly created social order (Colás 2007, 137-143). As such the British military normally served as the implementing mechanism for these actions.

The RAF Strategy is not intended to be as culturally invasive as British Nativism in Africa; however, it is designed to provide very aggressive and intrusive military intervention as needed. An imperial power’s use of their own overwhelming military

force to achieve a strategic interest is indicative of formal, or direct, imperialism, whereas most other aspects of the RAF Strategy are more akin to aspects of informal, or indirect, imperialism. However, at the heart of the RAF Strategy are units that are trained to execute decisive action. All RAF units must achieve these high levels of competencies in the first year of their 24-month alignment cycle and retain them for the remaining one year availability status (Campbell 2012, 6, 8, 12). This component of the RAF Strategy supports the DoD Defense Strategy pillar of “project power and win decisively, to defeat aggression, disrupt and destroy terrorist networks” (DoD 2014, v). Therefore, the RAF engagement strategy is a means to an end that enables operational access to stage and conduct these conventional military operations if ever required.

With regards to counterterrorism the RAF Strategy forms a type of imperial sphere of influence. This represents an area in which the U.S. proclaims a right to dictate or direct actions due to the potential threat on U.S. interests at home and abroad if ignored. President George W. Bush’s statement made in 2001, “you are either with us, or you are against us” is still championed to some degree in 2014. The U.S. counterterrorism strategy seeks to deny terrorist elements a safe-haven in any country, therefore the U.S. will aggressively compel or coerce other sovereign nations to participate in or permit U.S. action within their borders should terrorist elements exist therein.

Section 1206 and 1208 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) provide the Secretary of Defense with additional authorities for the purposes of counterterrorism and stability. DoD is able to execute foreign military engagements outside of the normal Department of State (DoS) Title 22 authorities and DoS

engagement programs. The programs executed under these authorities are the clearest example of how the RAF Strategy aligns with the U.S. counterterrorism sphere of influence. The Section 1206 and 1208 programs enable the military to train other nations' military and police forces for the express purpose of conducting counterterrorism operations and activities within their borders. They are preventative tools through which the U.S. helps their allies and partners to "confront extremists and other potential sources of global instability within their borders" (Serafino 2014, 4). Until recent years, these programs were the exclusive domain of U.S. special operation forces, but Secretary Gates insisted that the mission was important enough to expand and obtain support from general purpose forces (Serafino 2014, 4). The RAF Strategy will therefore greatly assist in the U.S. exploitation of the counterterrorism sphere of influence throughout the globe. At a time when most of the military budgets are being cut, the 1206 budget increased 28 percent since FY13 with the potential to grow further (DSCA 2014, 17).

As previously described, one aspect that challenges the nature and effectiveness of imperialism approaches includes the nature of the environment to include its impact on the imperial forces. The Portuguese held a sphere of influence regarding trade in West Africa in from the mid-1500s to the start of the 1700s (Headrick 2010, 141). However, they were not able to expand beyond the costal encampments due to the barrier of malaria and disease that killed nearly every European who entered the interior of Africa at the time (Headrick 2010, 142-147). The only reason why they were able to continue their imperial ambitions for over 200 years was because they relied upon native agents to breach that interior and exploit the resources that lay therein (Headrick 2010, 145). In a similar fashion, the U.S. relied upon Philippine security forces from 1899 to 1902 to

breach the cultural divide and successfully suppress a guerilla campaign to ensure the solvency of their imperial ambitions (Kuzmarov 2012, 21-35). By using native agents to achieve objectives within a sphere of influence, the RAF Strategy is following a similar path used frequently in the imperial context.

The examination undertaken to answer this study's primary research question revealed that the RAF Strategy seeks to enable U.S. influence over other partnered countries so that they can be "shaped" by the CCDR for the benefit of U.S. and shared interests. To accomplish this, the RAF Strategy heavily relies upon the same tactics and methods used by previous world powers in the practice of indirect or informal imperialism. These shared methods include a heavy reliance upon proxy forces to satiate national interests in the region, as well as the establishment of a protectorate relationship to maintain influence and control regionally without necessitating invasive management. The U.S. will use the RAF Strategy as the primary vehicle by which it promotes democracy and perceived universal values upon other nations. This active manipulation of foreign culture to a more acquiescent stance was the same approach used by past imperial powers such as Britain. The U.S. retains a "sphere of influence" over counterterrorism that asserts the right to dictate how terrorism is fought on foreign shores in the same manner that past imperial powers monopolized the manner in which trade took place. Finally, the RAF Strategy enables unprecedented U.S. operational access that can be used very quickly to implement formal imperialism, or the direct use of force against another nation when it perceives vital interests to be threatened.



Secondary Research Question:  
Comparison to Other Foreign Policy

The RAF Strategy does not have a close equal on the global stage of foreign policy. The U.S. DoD holds unparalleled depth and capabilities that no other nation can match. The ability to project the persistent global military presence required of the RAF Strategy currently remains a uniquely U.S. attribute. In order to provide a basis of comparison, this study sought to compare the RAF Strategy, as it fits into the larger U.S. foreign policy efforts, to the approach of China in Africa. China holds the world's second largest GDP and is in the midst of massive military and economic growth. China's rapid economic growth is not simply a pleasant byproduct of its chosen economic model, but a calculated essential need to sustain standards of living within its enormous population. Richard Behar describes China as, "an elephant riding a bicycle. If it slows down, it could fall off, and the earth might quake" (Behar 2008c).

In order to maintain this momentum, China aggressively pursued a foreign policy in Africa that secured substantial quotients of natural resources to sustain and feed its domestic-based industry. China-Africa trade exponentially increased from \$1 billion in 1990, \$10 billion in 2000, and over \$150 billion in 2011 (Brown 2012, 1-2). Africa holds vast reserves of un-tapped potential; within its shores, it holds 98 percent of the world's chromium, 90 percent of the cobalt and platinum, 64 percent of the manganese, and 50 percent of the gold, as well as vast oil fields and hydroelectric potential (Behar 2008c). China's approach to secure these and other resources in support of their national interests directly competes with the U.S. approach, a component of which is the RAF Strategy. The aggressive tactics used by China have led many to label them as practitioners of the

Dependency Theory in Africa, which provides pertinent context upon which to assess their foreign policies.

Dependency Theory describes an economic paradigm in which a dominant power shapes regional conditions with less powerful nations to ensure a disproportionate benefit; the lesser nation becomes dependent upon the success of the larger economy for its own welfare (Dos Santos 1971, 226). The tenants of Dependency Theory require a dominant power to impose a deliberate resource underdevelopment upon another country when alternative approaches would create greater parity and shared benefit (Ferraro 2008, 58-64). The dominant power acts out of self-interest and often with the help of corrupt local elite. Underdevelopment describes an environment in which resources are being used but not for the benefit of the state that owns them; this differs from an undeveloped state in which the resources are not being used at all or in measure commensurate with their potential. In a dependent relationship, the lesser country is not poor because they lagged behind the rest of the world, but because they were coercively cast into this dependent role by the dominant power (Ferraro 2008, 58-64). This seeming injustice is enabled by the complicit participation of corrupt elite within the less powerful country who obtain personal benefit.

China's foreign policy in Africa, though largely kept in confidence, does not appear to deliberately seek trade relations within the Dependency Theory construct; however, their quest to secure long-term resource trade benefits with Africa does engender many of the same consequences. According to David E. Brown, Senior Diplomatic Advisor to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, China's primary goals in Africa are to secure natural resources, tap an emerging market with long-term potential,

secure local government and UN support, and ensure the diplomatic isolation of Taiwan (Brown 2012, 1-2).

China's pursuit of this first goal, securing natural resources, brings it closest to the principles of the Dependency Theory. China is now Africa's largest trade partner, but the benefit of that trade is not necessarily distributed to the people of Africa. Ninety percent of Africa's exports to China are natural resources (Brown 2012, 16). However, Africa sees little of the potential wealth from its oil, minerals, metals, and raw timber because it does not have the capacity to unlock this resource wealth through local refinement within the continent. Africa only benefits from the selling of the rights to these resources and the cost of local labor through which they are extracted. Despite the cost of copper quintupling since 2001, the people of Zambia, who rank in China's top trade partners in Africa, have seen little corresponding gains (Behar 2008d). Despite the aforementioned ten-fold increase China-Africa trade since 2000, the poverty line in Zambia during the same time grew by 20 percent with 75 percent of the population now existing on \$1.25 a day or less (World Bank 2014a). China's top five Sub-Saharan African trade partners have an average poverty rate of over 63 percent with all but Angola seeing increases to their poverty rate over the last ten years (World Bank 2014b). Chinese entrepreneurs cut down trees without replanting, mine minerals without environmental protection restrictions, and any regulations put in place are easily avoided through corrupt local officials (Behar 2008d). The export of these raw materials to China has in fact undercut the critical light industry of these impoverished African nations causing greater struggle (Behar 2008d).

Although this aspect of the Sino-African relationship seems to fit the tenants of the Dependency Theory, China does take a determined step away from this allegation as demonstrated by their apparent intention to maintain long-term trade relationships with what they view as an emerging market in Africa. Despite practically bleeding many African countries dry in their pursuit of resources, China committed vast amounts of aid and development projects, in an effort to build their soft power and ensure a stable long-term trading partner. As of 2009, Africa received the majority, nearly 47 percent, of Chinese foreign assistance and aid (Hanauer 2014, 36). Between 2000 and 2011, China committed \$75 billion in aid and development projects to Africa, while the U.S. committed approximately \$90 billion in aid and assistance to Africa during the same time. However, the majority of Chinese aid and development projects are tied to trade agreements or resource rights (Behar 2008d). In exchange for the rights to harvest resources from oil fields, mineral deposits, or forests, China agrees to build government infrastructure or commits to aid projects. Chinese aid to Africa is first and foremost intended to benefit the Chinese economic objectives, which then has the complimentary effect of also benefiting Africans. Despite this seemingly selfish connotation of what defines aid, these projects do have a tangible impact on individual development potential.

The primary difference between the Chinese approach to Africa and the U.S. approach as enabled by the RAF Strategy is that China seeks to pursue an economic relationship first, upon which everything else is built, whereas the U.S. seeks to engage in governance and security, after which a reliable economic relationship can be built. The stated purpose of the RAF Strategy is to enable the CCDRs. General Rodriguez, the commander of AFRICOM, stated that his organization's mission was to "promote

regional security, stability, and prosperity” by working with African partners “to ensure our military efforts support and complement comprehensive solutions to security challenges that leverage all elements of national and international power, including civilian efforts to gradually strengthen governance, justice, and the rule of law” (Rodriguez 2014, 5-6). The U.S. strategy in Africa seeks a whole of government approach to ensure security, stability, and democratic governance. With development in these lines of effort, the U.S. is then able to fully pursue its economic and national interests in the region. The RAF Strategy enables the CCDR to coordinate his security efforts to meet the policy objectives of U.S. Ambassadors in each country as well as the regional objectives shared by other government agencies (Rodriguez 2014, 6). General Rodriguez’s first priority is to extend U.S. influence to those countries which are most likely to in turn hold regional influence and leadership in the future (Rodriguez 2014, 2). Because the RAF Strategy is hinged upon influencing partner nations to act in concert with U.S. interests and in extension of universal values, the U.S. is careful to choose their initial partners. Empowering a corrupt military partner counters the effectiveness of U.S. strategy.

China is not nearly so restrictive in their choice of African partnerships. They engage countries first and foremost, on the basis of what is the most economically beneficial to them. The OECD/DAC establishes international norms for providing assistance. These regulations are grounded by transparency and the support of good governance. China’s foreign policy in Africa receives ample criticism for not only intentionally masking its actions, but supporting governments on the basis of economic benefit rather than good governance, which sometimes means the support of “dictatorial

and corrupt regimes” (Brown 2012, 42). Chinese assistance has largely been tied to infrastructure development that supports its economic objectives prior to transitioning to a more whole of government effort. Approximately 86 percent of the assistance and development aid China provided to Africa over the last ten years, was dedicated towards infrastructure development in line with economic objectives (AidData 2014). China’s commitment to stability and security in Africa has been secondary to its economic objectives. China limits its military to military engagements to specific skills such as mine clearing or operating mining equipment (Hanauer 2014, 43). However, China does participate actively in UN Peacekeeping forces, providing over 1,800 personnel for operations in Africa as of 2012 (Hanauer 2014, 44). The Chinese are also is the largest provider of military sales in Africa, which China considers part of its larger economic objectives rather than part of regional security objectives (Hanauer 2014, 41).

**Secondary Research Question:  
RAF Analysis and Evaluation**

To analyze the effectiveness of the RAF Strategy in the current global environment, this study focused on its recent implementation by 2/1 ABCT in Africa. Since the RAF concept is intended as a long-term effort between partner nations, the complete success or utter failure of the strategy will not be revealed solely by this initial trial. However, salient points and glaring sources of friction can be identified early through thoughtful self-reflection. As an example, 2/1 ABCT applied this approach through an AAR of their pre-deployment process, as well as an interim review of their utilization tour as the first regionally aligned ABCT. A correlated study came from United States Army Africa (USARAF) who served as the Army Service Component

Command (ASCC) for 2/1 ABCT during its utilization tour with AFRICOM, and generated an additional review of the execution of the RAF concept from a theater perspective. A final point of analysis came through 1/4 ABCT's AAR of the military-to-military engagement training it conducted with partner nations in the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility. Although 1/4 ABCT did not deploy under the RAF construct, its mission objectives were closely aligned. As such, 1/4 ABCT drew from the 2/1 ABCT train-up and experience to provide a more complete analysis of its mission to enable detailed planning for their own deployment.

An overwhelming lesson learned emphasized by the initial experience of 2/1 ABCT was the advantage of the cultural education during its pre-deployment training. USARAF remarked that even a small quotient of cultural awareness resulted in great strides with both the partnered military and the local populace (Roe 2014, 7). Although 2/1 ABCT received clear intent regarding the perceived importance of cultural education, they were not told how to conduct the needed cultural preparation for the unit. Despite this, 2/1 ABCT generated varied methods for its subordinate units and leaders, including seeking expert advice from the local university, harnessing the cultural experts within the military, and establishing their own internal "university" (Brooks 2014). This improved the unit's culture, religious expertise, and language (CREL) capability, which provided an increase to individual Soldiers' knowledge of the operational environment and overall effectiveness within that environment (Benton 2013, 5). This was reinforced by the 1/4 ABCT's observations which was able to obtain limited cultural education prior to their deployment to the CENTCOM area of responsibility. In reflection, 1/4 ABCT stated that

they would have benefited from a program conducted in the same manner as 2/1 ABCT's (CALL 2013, 4-5).

Other noted benefits from the initial implementation of the RAF concept include persistent and enduring relationships with partner nations. Both USARAF and 2/1 ABCT noted that as a unit conducted multiple or continued engagements with a partner nations, the issues of coordination and planning became much easier and more efficient (Roe 2014, 17). Developing these relationships is one of the primary objectives of the RAF Strategy, which then facilitates interoperability and influence. When this efficiency was executed in concert with a dedicated manpower source in the form of 2/1 ABCT, the rapid reaction and response to new training requirements proved to be another benefit of the RAF Strategy (Roe 2014, 4).

All reports emphasized the importance of the Army's basic war-fighting competencies known as decisive action, as well as preparing culturally for respective training engagements. The RAF Strategy seeks to enable the autonomous security capacity of a partner nation through an enduring relationship. Critical to this is that the Officers and Soldiers who comprise the RAF unit are able to execute and teach the Army Core Competencies required of them. As a result, 2/1 recommended that the best way to prepare a RAF ABCT for a utilization tour is to put them through a traditional combat training center (CTC) rotation (Benton 2013, 6). The RAF concept outlined by the Army supports this plan; a RAF unit's first year will be spent preparing for their mission by conducting decisive action training, culminating with a CTC rotation (U.S. Army G-3/5/7 2014).



Despite these demonstrated benefits, the initial operational experience of 2/1 ABCT revealed some shortcomings in the RAF Strategy. Most notably, after years of deliberate combat in mature theaters, 2/1 ABCT was not ready for the amount of logistic challenges they would face in a vast and underdeveloped theater. 2/1 ABCT needed to adapt to small unit deployments in austere environments, with limited sustainment and enablers available organically or externally to the brigade (Roe 2014, 3, 5). This logistical shortcoming was compounded by funding issues. Although the RAF concept is designed to optimize efficiency by pinpointing a requirement and deploying only the minimum needed force, the funding options are often confusing. During 2/1 ABCT's tenure as AFRICOM's dedicated force, funding often was not finalized until shortly before the execution of the engagement, which made it difficult to plan a cohesive mission (Benton 2013, 9). Additionally, despite the optimization of each individual engagement, the availability of a dedicated brigade exponentially increased the number of training opportunities attempted, which taxed the original allocation of the funding budgets. Although never formally counted as scheduled missions, most of the conceived 2/1 ABCT RAF missions were cancelled, with the most common reason for cancellation being a lack of funding (Benton 2013, 8).

Some of the cultural education objectives outlined by the RAF Strategy proved too difficult to accomplish. 2/1 ABCT identified that the short notification timeline for some training missions made it difficult to bring soldiers' up to a baseline level of cultural understanding for the region, let alone obtain a familiarity with language (Benton 2013, 6). USARAF held the opinion that while a rudimentary understanding of the local culture was beneficial to military engagements, the short duration of the average

engagement did not make it necessary to learn the local language (Roe 2014, 6).

Furthermore the continent of Africa has so many languages and cultures that it is not realistic for a unit to learn the confusing combination required to achieve the originally envisioned cultural success (Roe 2014, 6).

Given this initial record of performance, and knowledge of other competing forms of foreign policy, it is possible to evaluate the RAF Strategy by set criteria. Since the RAF Strategy seeks to develop partner nation capabilities, this study used a modified form of the established development project evaluation criteria set by the OECD/DAC. This system evaluates a development program's efficiency, effectiveness, impact, relevance, and sustainability. To account for the specific evaluation of the RAF Strategy and other foreign policy in the modern age, this study also added the additional evaluation criteria of targeted partner assent and transparency.

To provide a comprehensive basis of comparison, this analysis also gauged the effectiveness of relevant alternative and competing strategies. The primary alternative to the RAF Strategy would be for the U.S. to pursue a limited engagement role. Since this strategy is not aggressive, its evaluation serves as a good baseline that can then be used to assess the more aggressive RAF Strategy. The evaluation of the Chinese strategy in Africa also provides a good basis of comparison since it represents a competing form of strategy executed by an emerging global power in an environment of shared national interest. Finally, since the primary research question of this study seeks to assess parallels between the RAF Strategy and historical imperialism, the selected evaluation included one of these historical models. Although it is an antiquated form of foreign policy, this examination evaluated the effectiveness of the nineteenth century model of British

imperialism if executed in the modern age. This additional comparison illuminates why the imperial model was successful, the roots of its failure, as well as concerning parallels to the current RAF Strategy.

The evaluation assessed the degree to which each foreign policy or strategy satisfied respective criteria. The resultant gradation of this discernment fit into three categories; each assessed policy met the criteria to a low, average, or high grade. The results of this assessment can be seen in the below table.

Table 2. Results of Short-Term and Long-Term Foreign Policy Evaluation

	Short-Term				Long-Term			
	RAF	Limited Engagement	China in Africa	Imperial Britain	RAF	Limited Engagement	China in Africa	Imperial Britain
<b>Efficiency</b>	Average	Average	Average	High	High	Average	High	Average
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Average	Low	High	High	High	Average	Average	Average
<b>Impact</b>	Average	Average	Average	Average	High	Low	Average	Average
<b>Relevance</b>	Low	Average	Low	Low	Average	Low	Average	Low
<b>Sustainability</b>	High	Average	Average	Average	Average	High	Low	Low
<b>Target Assent</b>	Average	Average	Average	Low	High*	Average	Low*	Low
<b>Transparency</b>	Average	Average	Low	High	Average	High	Low	High

\*Long-term partner nation assent largely dependent upon near-term outcomes

Source: Created by author

The RAF Strategy is not impressive when only considering its applicability over the next five years. Its efficiency over this time period would only be considered average due largely to the fact that this concept has not been reinforced with the logistical framework necessary to make it a reality. RAF units do not possess the organic logistics capabilities required to maintain near autonomous operations in austere environments. To make the frequent, small-scale deployments efficient, further regional support systems

will have to be established. This includes forward staging theater specific equipment to enable its quick and economical use in training engagement scenarios. Once these systems are put in place the efficiency of the RAF Strategy when projected over the long-term improves to a high rating.

The effectiveness of the strategy in the near-term only achieves an average rating. The RAF concept does have the immediate benefit of geographically focused and mission tailored units that bolster its effectiveness in the near term, but the strategy relies upon the construction of lasting relationships in order to expand the security capacity of partner nations and increase the ability of the CCDR to shape and influence his area of responsibility. This requires time; therefore, over the short-term outside of already established alliances, the RAF concept will only yield new and burgeoning relationships, a limited range of missions, and a limited degree of influence. As was the case with the strategy's efficiency, its effectiveness will improve to a rating of high over time if enduring relationships are established. The CCDR will be able to manipulate these relationships to shape the security environment of the region for the benefit of national interests. However, this is highly dependent upon a continued and enduring effort at partnership. Should budgetary or resource concerns in the future diminish the priority of engagement with another country, then the effectiveness of the strategy will suffer to a corresponding degree.

The impact of the RAF Strategy upon the most prominent U.S. National interests is considered average over the near term. While increased military engagements can serve to facilitate diplomatic dialogues and enable a whole of government approach through other avenues, when these relationships are in their infancy, they carry minimal

impact upon DOD's three pillars: protect the homeland, build security globally, and project power and win decisively (DoD 2014, v). It will once again take years of continued effort and presence to produce significant effects. Once relationships are established and proven over time, the trust and influence that results can be used by the CDR to build towards strategic objectives.

Despite the promising potential of the RAF concept, its implementation comes at a time that makes its near-term relevance poor. Factors to this inopportune timing include massive reductions in budget and manpower. Although regional alignment is supposed to reduce the cost and manpower required for each mission, the nature of the strategy requires a rapid increase in the number of missions conducted. Many forces also remain tied to Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan or require a major reset and shift in focus, making the implementation of the RAF Strategy difficult over the near-term. Finally, the wars in Afghanistan and especially Iraq proved unpopular globally, which makes it difficult to establish new military engagements with partners that may remain suspicious and wary of a partnership with the U.S. With time, the suitability and relevance of the strategy will improve. The trend towards globalization will create greater engagement and interaction and a trend towards collective efforts amongst nations, which will play into the construct of the RAF Strategy. However, the degree to which the U.S. seeks to shape and influence its partners will always result in the retention of some degree of distrust and suspicion.

This suspicion makes it difficult for the U.S. to obtain partner nation concurrence and assent too the desired relationship outlined in the RAF Strategy. Over the near term, the strategy is only able to achieve an average degree of concurrence from prospective

partners. Many nations are eager for U.S. assistance, but often they are only eager for U.S. funding and assistance in specific categories of their choosing. Without the established influence that comes with a long-term relationship, the U.S. may not be able to align interests and priorities with another nation. The degree to which they are able to do this over time depends mostly upon the relationships they establish in the near term. If fledgling partner nations do not see mutual gain and benefits from an enduring military relationship with the U.S., then they are not likely to continue the partnership over time. Should the U.S. training engagements carry unexpectedly disastrous consequences, or the U.S. should prove itself to be disrespectful, manipulative, and self-interested, the U.S. will see a wide-spread difficulty in obtaining willing concurrence from partner nations. However, by design the RAF Strategy is culturally focused in order to produce positive engagements and mutually beneficial improvements to security capacity. If this concept proves reality in the near-term, then the long term willingness of partner nations to participate in military engagements with the U.S. will be high.

Another critical factor in partner nation assent is the transparency entailed in the RAF Strategy. The degree to which the U.S. is able to clearly elucidate their objectives through the RAF concept is assessed to remain average both in the short-term and long-term. In order to remove suspicion, the U.S. is very clear in its quest to promote global security, universal values, and a strong and open economy (DoD 2014, v). However, in order to retain its technological and operational edge, the U.S. will always have to veil portions of its objectives. While an enduring military relationship with another nation may produce obvious mutual benefits, there very well may be other mutual benefits that

the U.S. is not able to advertise due to their sensitivity. Regardless of intention, these actions when publicized will create suspicion on the part of the host nation.

The most troubling assessment of the RAF Strategy comes from its sustainability. In the near term, it is highly sustainable because the engagements are limited in number and scope. Forces are drawing down in Afghanistan which is rapidly freeing up more manpower for regional alignment. In the near-term, the relationships under the RAF construct remain new and burgeoning. The U.S. is planting seeds that require a low degree of maintenance until they sprout. However, over the long-term, the prospects of maintaining this crop of relationships become more difficult. The RAF Strategy achieves success if relationships expand and military engagements take place over a broader range of subjects, thereby increasing security capacity and capability. In less than eight months, 2/1 ABCT conducted introductory training engagements with over 30 countries (McHugh 2014, 9). Should these relationships expand, it will be difficult for one, or even two brigades to maintain the level of commitment required to collectively improve their security capacity. This increased operational tempo will also weigh heavily on certain portions of the U.S. Army. Officers and Senior Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) will likely carry a heavier burden than junior soldiers, which may be difficult to sustain over the course of a career. Finally, it will be difficult for the U.S. Army Human Resources command to manage its manpower pool when there is definitive benefit to keep the regional expertise gained through a regional alignment within the associated aligned units.

The primary alternative to regional alignment is a strategy of limited engagement. This strategy would also be historically appropriate as the U.S. tends to reduce its

military strength, budget, and limit its engagements following a major conflict. A strategy of limited engagement would focus more on the internal maintenance of the U.S. Army rather than its external engagement. This approach concentrates on retaining and maintaining core competencies and the health of the force rather than a proactive global presence. In this strategy, the U.S. would maintain its current military footprint and commit to occasional engagements with established partners and allies. The U.S. would not actively expand its global presence or proactively seek a larger pool of military engagements, but would engage globally only when strategically required.

When compared to the RAF concept, a strategy of limited engagement is much less suited to accomplish national policy objectives. In all categories of evaluation, it is either commensurate or less capable than the RAF Strategy with only a few exceptions. The prospects that limited engagement holds for long-term efficiency are worse because it does not build upon the logistical framework needed for global engagement. This approach holds less effectiveness because it does not provide focused engagement designed to develop specific areas of security capacity and instead relies upon occasional training engagements that will likely only superficially cover a myriad of subjects. The ability to impact vital national interests through limited engagement is significantly lower because it does not proactively seek relationships by which a CDR can shape and influence the environment. As the trend of globalization continues, this tactic will also find itself less relevant in the future since it focuses more on internal strength and readiness than it does upon international cooperation and collective effort.

Adopting a strategy of limited engagement does provide marked advantages in near-term relevance and long-term sustainability and transparency. Following thirteen



years of continuous combat and receding budgets and manpower, a limited engagement strategy would be a more appropriate means of re-focusing the Army. This allows U.S. Army forces to reset and regain some core competencies that atrophied over years of focused counterinsurgency and stability operations. In the long-term a limited engagement strategy is more sustainable simply because it does not commit the U.S. Army to an aggressive contract of engagements and global presence. This approach affords selective engagement rather than extensive self-propagated relationship maintenance. Under the limited engagement strategy, the U.S. would be more internally focused, which would create less suspicion regarding their global engagements. When these do occur, they would likely carry a more apparent reason and signature than a multitude of small engagements spread throughout the globe.

China's foreign policy approach in Africa differs from the RAF concept since it is an economic strategy rather than a military strategy. However, the selected evaluation criteria are rooted in OECD/DAC principles of development which is a common objective between both China and the U.S. in Africa. After scrutinizing China's discernible policy approach on the basis of these evaluation criteria, it is apparent that it holds some near-term advantages in its effectiveness, but less overall capability in the long-term. As revealed in this study's earlier analysis of China's approach to Africa, its first course of action is to seek advantageous trade agreements with various African nations in order to secure natural resources. Often times these agreements are made with the corrupt elite and afford Chinese entrepreneurs with vast rights pertaining to the harvest of natural resources within that country. This provides an immediate profit and

economical effectiveness to Chinese objectives, whose insatiable economy continues to grow and retains an immediate need for these resources.

This immediate benefit comes at the price of its long-term solvency as a foreign policy strategy. Although it obtains a moderate degree of partner nation assent, its policy objectives are notoriously secretive and masked. This lack of transparency in the near-term will prove detrimental to the long-term assent of its partner nations should the relationship not prove beneficial to the people of each respective partner African nation. China is implementing a vast array of development projects, but as previously mentioned, they are tied specifically to Chinese economic objectives. This lack of a “whole of government” approach in each country could lead to a disproportionate development of that national structure. Without a balanced security approach, China’s economic-centric approach may simply lay the foundations for future instability. As a result, this approach reveals long-term deficiencies in the categories of effectiveness, impact, sustainability, target assent, and transparency when compared to the long-term prospects of the RAF Strategy. The only category in which it retains a long term advantage is its efficiency. Should the economically-linked development projects currently being implemented by China across Africa develop as planned, then it will only serve to streamline and optimize China’s individual economic efforts in each country.

### Conclusion

Through analysis of the extensive research conducted in this study, this chapter sought to answer the primary research question, “Is the RAF Strategy a modern form of imperialism?” The results of this analysis indicated that the US RAF Strategy was definitely not a form of the historical formal imperialism commonly practiced by nations

such as France in Algeria and Indochina. However, the research indicated that despite good and benevolent intentions, the RAF Strategy serves as a customized instrument for a new variety of informal imperialism. The object of this new form of informal or indirect imperialism is to obtain the power to influence rather than physically control the governments and resources of other nations. This enables the U.S. to retain some form of regional control throughout the globe and enables it to assert its foreign policy objectives.

Having established its role as a tool of a new form of indirect imperialism, this chapter then analyzed China's foreign policy practices in Africa to provide a basis of comparison for the RAF Strategy. Analysis of research revealed that although it cannot be immediately determined if China's long-term actions will create asymmetrically favorable relations governed by the Dependency Theory, their actions bear enough similarities to be concerning. Overall, China approaches Africa by establishing immediate economic advantages, and implementing development projects with the goal of empowering the rest of the government and its security. By creating a sound economic base, China believes that other aspects of security and welfare will develop subsequently.

The final portion of this chapter sought to analyze and evaluate the implementation of the RAF Strategy in the modern global environment. This study utilized the evaluation criteria for development projects employed by the OECD/DAC modified with additional criteria to provide a complete assessment of foreign policy strategy. To provide a thorough basis of comparison other strategies were also analyzed. These included an alternative strategy of limited engagement, China's competitive strategy in Africa, as well as the historically linked policy of British imperialism in the nineteenth century. The results indicated that in the near-term, the RAF Strategy will not

achieve any major points of advantage when compared against other strategies. The strength of the RAF concept comes over the long-term when continued engagements and concerted effort to develop relationships will improve collective security and enable U.S. interests. The major danger identified in the RAF Strategy is one of overextension. The RAF Strategy requires a major commitment to advancing partnerships and collective security that may prove unmanageable and beyond the capabilities of the all-volunteer Army.

The next chapter will present the conclusions and recommendations derived from this study. Given the established link to imperialism there are notable lessons learned from history that should be considered when implementing the RAF Strategy across the U.S. Army. Additionally, the next chapter will identify recommended areas of research for further development on this subject, as well as the objectives that this research did not achieve.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye  
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,  
Sneak home and pray you'll never know  
The hell where youth and laughter go.

— Siegfried Sassoon, *Suicide in the Trenches*

#### Introduction

In order to provide a unique point from which to analyze the depths of the RAF Strategy, this study seeks to answer the primary research question, “Is the U.S. Army’s Regionally Aligned Force strategy a modern form of imperialism?” An analysis of research presented in the previous chapter revealed that the RAF Strategy does in fact function as a tool of a new form of indirect imperialism. While the RAF concept does not seek to directly control governments and resources, this approach enables the indirect manipulation of the same through the power of influence and partnership. To obtain a thorough understanding of the RAF Strategy and its applicability in the modern era, this study then compared it to the foreign policy approach that China executes in Africa. The main difference between these competing approaches is that China pursues a program focused first on its economic affluence whereas the RAF Strategy is merely one tool in a whole of government approach to shaping partner nations. Finally, this study further assessed the RAF Strategy and other forms of foreign policy through the use of set evaluation criteria. This added analysis indicated that the RAF Strategy’s strength is its long-term applicability due mostly to the relationships it seeks to cultivate over time.

This new approach is a significant departure from the U.S. Army's previous singular focus on Iraq and Afghanistan over the last thirteen years. The RAF Strategy is now the central idea that guides the global employment of the U.S. Army as it moves into an uncertain future. This chapter builds upon the results and presentation of the research, and is intended to provide conclusions and interpretations that can guide the U.S. Army as it implements the RAF Strategy across its entire force. Chapter 5 also provides recommendations for additional research on this subject that can contribute to the advancement and refinement of the RAF Strategy in the interest of U.S. national security policy.

### Interpretation of Findings

#### Summary

This study established that there is a clear link between the U.S. Army's RAF Strategy and imperialism. Even if the U.S. Army did not intend any imperial connotations in the design of the RAF Strategy, parallels exist and therefore must be considered prior to the strategy's full global implementation. In pursuit of a greater understanding of the RAF Strategy, this study also assessed the current global environment of its application and competing forms of foreign policy. Using Africa as a specified point of analysis and uniform evaluation criteria, the comparison in chapter 4 established that the RAF Strategy, as part of a larger U.S. effort, holds the greatest potential to be a positive contributor to U.S. policy over the long-term future. With this appreciation as well as acknowledgement the RAF Strategy holds similarities to both modern and historical forms of imperialism, any lessons learned from past practices of imperialism may have an apt relevance to the RAF Strategy's future implementation.

## Secondary Research Question: Recommended Considerations for the RAF Strategy Based on Historical Lessons

The first lesson gained from centuries of imperialism that carries modern relevance is that of cultural sensitivities. The RAF concept emphasizes the importance of cultural education as one of its fundamental pillars; however, early implementation of the concept by 2/1 ABCT already shows signs that its importance will be marginalized. This reality exists because cultural and linguistic proficiency is difficult to achieve and the added time needed to do so will then limit the number of engagements that can be accomplished. A study of the Indian Sepoy mutiny of 1857 against the British provides corroborates the importance of cultural education during RAF pre-deployment training. The mutiny took place in a large part because the British elected to actively interfere with the local cultural standards in India and within the Sepoy force. In the same way the U.S. seeks to enforce universal values, the British saw the practice of spousal immolation at the funerals of prominent males to be abhorrent and sought to ban the practice (Chua 2007, 216-217). Following this first step into cultural alteration, the British then implemented other actions that affected the cultural identity of the Indians such as granting the permission to divorce, only teaching English in Indian schools, and banning mustaches and beards within the Sepoy force (Chua 2007, 216-217). The impact of British insensitivity to Indian culture came to a tragic culmination in August of 1856 the British introduced a new cartridge for the standard issue rifle that was greased with a combination of cow and pig fat and required the soldier to bite into it during the loading process (Chua 2007, 217). A massive mutiny ensued in which horrible atrocities were committed on both sides.

This example from history should reinforce the importance of pinpoint cultural training during the RAF pre-deployment process. Every soldier that participates in the engagement needs to know the critical cultural sensitivities of their intended training partner well in advance. Additionally, all soldiers must also be conscious of their own elitist or arrogant attitudes when interacting with the indigenous forces and population, which will only serve to exacerbate any perceived cultural slights. The RAF element can mitigate this issue through deliberate culturally-tailored approaches to the training, if given enough time to adequately prepare. One technique could include sending a small group in advance of the main RAF training force in order to obtain cultural confirmations and educate the rest of the training element. Although the parameters of the original RAF design emphasizes the importance of this type of pre-deployment, initial AARs from USARAF indicate that specific and advanced cultural education will be neglected in exchange for rapid production. As outlined in the execution order, the minimum notification timeline to conduct new platoon and company sized RAF engagements is far too short to adequately achieve the originally envisioned levels of cultural and linguistic familiarity (FORSCOM 2012, 4).

Another major lesson from history that holds modern bearing on the RAF Strategy is that of imperial overextension. This study's research revealed that imperial powers traditionally continued their expansion in order to maintain their status quo. Eliot Cohen, a professor of strategic studies, correctly identified this when he stated, "Herein lies one of the curses of empire. . . . To let go never feels safe and indeed rarely is" (Murphy 2007, 201). Imperial overextension has been the death nail of history's greatest world powers. In order to gain the additional revenue required to fund the security



necessary to maintain its oversea holdings, the British constantly conducted conquest far beyond their original scope. From Nigeria, to Egypt, to Afghanistan, the British expeditions grew at a rapid pace. These imperial holdings became the heavy weight that caused their empire to drown in the turbulent waters of two World Wars.

The greatest empire known to man fell victim to this same trap of imperialism. The Roman Empire eventually collapsed due to the unsustainable cost of maintaining the empire. They maintained a remarkably successful empire for a huge swath of history because they held the best trained and equipped soldiers, they incorporated the people they conquered into the empire and government ranks, and their logistic system was eons beyond the capabilities of their foes (Murphy 2007, 67-68, 69, 88-89, 203, 204-205). Despite all these factors, this broad scale commitment became too expensive for Rome to maintain their armies to the level required to defend their vast borders, and they spent a disproportionately large sum of their budget on the military which could not be sustained over the course of centuries (Murphy 2007, 204-205).

Woodrow Wilson was also keenly aware of the burden of imperialism. Despite this, he felt that the United States held an obligation to, “constitute ourselves the champions of constitutional government and the integrity and independence of free states throughout America, North and South.” (Judis 2004, 90-91) With this, he initiated the modern practice of the U.S. role in the spread of democracy and human rights; however, Wilson advocated that the U.S. was not even capable of enforcing this within its own hemisphere let alone the entire globe (Judis 2004, 205). This became the basis for his advocacy and creation of a league of nations with a collective responsibility to ensure peace and the dissemination of democracy.

These three lessons in imperial overextension should resonate with the current efforts to implement the RAF Strategy. In principle it is relatively easy to create new training and partner relationships through the RAF concept; unfortunately as demonstrated by history, it is much harder to maintain the promises and commitments required when these relationships begin to grow. If the United States seeks to solely manage and maintain the prolific global influence that the RAF Strategy seeks to create, it runs the danger of exceeding its capacity. With acknowledgment, the U.S. RAF Strategy could incorporate some of the elements of multilateralism championed by Woodrow Wilson. Many of the United States' closest, long-standing allies would strongly desire to incorporate a RAF-style concept into their own national strategies but lack the means and capability. Incorporating these close allies formally into RAF engagements will decrease the load on U.S. forces and stave off overextension while still promoting the advancement of partner nations for the benefit of American and allied interests. This also holds the concomitant benefit of creating the global perception of a multilaterally executed strategy that mitigates any imperial stigma that is attached to the RAF Strategy.

Despite all of the noblest intentions at its core, the U.S. RAF Strategy always runs the risk of producing a global perception of the effort that carries some degree of imperial or hegemonic context, if executed as it is currently designed. This modern quandary once again can trace its roots to earlier periods of history. From its inception, imperialism was often justified by the concept of bringing “civilization” to “savages”. Although this justification was readily accepted in the eighteenth century, by the end of the nineteenth century, as the collective social consciousness of nations grew, the cause for imperialism

often required a nobler and more defensible champion. The rise of Social Darwinism at the end of the nineteenth century provided scientific “validation” of the idea of a communal obligation to advance and educate less-developed cultures and groups. This was most acutely felt within British society, and this “White Man’s Burden” was used to justify conquest in Africa. Similarly, the United States considered itself a “benevolent empire” that was “freeing” the Philippines from Spanish oppression and promoting liberty and equality (Judis 2004, 47). The predominant narrative to imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was that it produced a global benefit by forcing the natural evolution of less-advanced people, thereby enabling them to participate upon the world’s stage. When acted upon, this justification for imperialism created the opposite effect from what was intended and desired. Subjugated people did not gratefully revel in their own “advancement” but rather stewed in discontent and nurtured rebellion. Imperialist powers were popularly perceived to be selfish aggressors and not benevolent leaders bestowing the gift of their in-person mentorship. History demonstrates that the practice of imperialism normally breeds contempt rather than bridging racism and cultural conflict within the affected nation or region.

One of the most important salient points from this lesson is that those who execute the U.S. RAF Strategy must always understand there are adversaries with opposing narratives who seek to counter the U.S. RAF Strategy through their every action. When the United States popularly espouses the practice of engaging other nations in order to advance universal rights, a possible counter-narrative could be that they are aggressively seeking the change and destruction of a people’s culture and traditions. This undermining influence saturates an entire group of people with feelings of hate and

resentment rather than beholden appreciation. Given these lessons from history, the U.S. Army must carefully set the conditions for a RAF partnership. They must look beyond the short-term benefits of a potential partnership, and instead consider the long-term consequences that may arise from that partnership. An important step in this consideration would be to establish a minimum threshold for partnership through formal partner nation requirements and criteria. Countries should meet certain prerequisites and demonstrate a competency to care for their people prior to beginning RAF exchanges. A well-intentioned RAF engagement strategy may inadvertently fund and empower a foreign military that does not have the enduring capacity or intentions to support mutual goals and values. To avoid the historically-worn counter-narrative that the United States is an aggressor that achieves cooperation through coercion, an additional criterion for the creation of a RAF partnership could be that it is only conducted at the request of the host nation rather than the suggestion of the U.S. Regardless of the manner in which the U.S. Army enters into a RAF engagement with a partner nation, it must ensure transparency. There is no harm in selling a narrative, but it should be a truthful one. If the main benefit to a RAF partnership that yields an increased regional security is a boost to U.S. economic interests through increased global trade, then this should be clearly explained as the fundamental reason for establishing the partnership. Benevolence without personal benefit generates external suspicion, and the powerless will always see conspiracy in the actions of the powerful; transparency is the critical element required to defuse these perpetual sources of tension.

An approach to the RAF construct that could assist in neutralizing the counter-narrative is to establish a domestic component to RAF exchanges. The U.S. Army could

create international campuses throughout the domestic U.S. which perpetually host small units from potential partner nations prior to expanded engagements. In this scenario, the U.S. could invite and logistically enable a prospective partner nation in Africa to send a squad or staff element to a regional “RAF campus” that is adjacent to its geographically aligned U.S. Army Unit. This would serve as the first opportunity for the aligned U.S. Army RAF unit to train and learn the culture of the nation with which they intend to partner prior to executing much larger exchanges within that nation’s borders. By first inviting a prospective partner nation to the United States, it encourages familial relations between the two nations, and deters the appearance of aggression. It also encourages reciprocal actions; the prospective partner may then actively seek and request an expanded relationship with the U.S. Army rather than the respective CCDR exerting effort to convince that nation of the value and benefit of an expanded relationship. This concept would also have the benefit of consolidating elements from other partner nations by region in one location, thereby promoting regional working relationships that may be vital to ensuring security that spans beyond individual borders.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

In the course of this study many intriguing subjects for further research emerged. However, the first recommended area for further research originated from the failure to achieve an intended component of the research methodology for this study. In order to refine and explore what aspects or lessons of historical imperialism carry a current impact upon the execution of RAF operations, this study intended to interview members of 2/1 ABCT. Future research on the subject should interview leaders from this organization, or

any other organization that conducts RAF operations, to verify or disprove links between parallel themes and lessons learned from historical imperialism.

At the time of this research, there was not an abundant source of information or literature pertaining to the RAF Strategy. Of the information available, it almost completely consisted of unclassified material that carried a FOUO caveat. Although this information was considered during the analysis and subsequent conclusions in relation to the research questions, the presentation of these findings required very deliberate crafting to avoid use of FOUO information. As a result, many illustrative supporting points could not be portrayed in this thesis. Future research in this subject area should include a FOUO study that is able to fully utilize the information contained in all pertinent documents.

In order to produce discernible conclusions this study focused its analysis of the implementation of the RAF Strategy within the AFRICOM AOR. The task of assessing its global implementation is massive and would exceed the capacity of this study. Future research on the implementation of the RAF Strategy should be conducted by each CCMD AOR. There is the potential that the unique forms of competing foreign policy, or cultural trends that exist within Africa, would be different in other AORs and carry varied effects upon the implementation of the RAF concept.

Despite this study's best efforts, it did not obtain detailed information or conduct a detailed analysis of the costs of implementing the RAF Strategy. The prominent theme from the headquarters level of the U.S. Army was that the RAF Strategy optimizes costs and saves money. However, at the unit level, 2/1 ABCT described a multitude of prospective training engagements that were canceled due to a lack of funds. The fidelity that this study did achieve indicates that the truth lies somewhere in-between. While

individual training engagements are likely less expensive, the overall volume likely creates a larger budget demand than originally envisioned by the U.S. Army Headquarters. This study did not take into account the costs involved with growing the U.S. Army's logistical framework and forward positioning of equipment to better support RAF units. A recommended area for future research would be a deliberate analysis of the true costs of a fully implemented RAF Strategy across the globe. These costs could then be used to support or refute the conclusions of this research regarding the dangers of overextension.

Finally, while this study confirmed the potential for the success of the RAF Strategy, it made several recommendations for major changes to its construct prior to full implementation. These recommendations were the formal incorporation of established allied nations into RAF operations to decrease the requirement on the U.S. Army, the creation of minimum criteria that a nation must demonstrate prior to establishing a RAF partnership, and the concept of several domestic "RAF Campuses" at existing military bases to improve cultural training and mitigate the counter-narrative. Future research could explore the potential benefits, pitfalls, costs, and methods by which these recommendations would be or should be implemented.

### Conclusion

This study sought to answer the primary research question, "Is the U.S. Army's Regionally Aligned Force strategy a modern form of imperialism?" The results of this research indicate that the RAF Strategy is not a tool of formal imperialism, but rather a customized instrument for a new variety of informal imperialism, the object of which is the power to influence rather than physical control over governments and resources.

Through this power of influence enabled by the RAF Strategy, the U.S. seeks to indirectly maintain some form of regional control in its foreign policy objectives. The secondary research questions explored the relationship of China's foreign policy approach in Africa to the RAF Strategy implementation in that same AOR. The research in this area revealed that China employs an approach that caters to its economic needs first and is reminiscent of the principles of Dependency Theory, but cannot yet be defined as such. By establishing economic relationships and supporting development projects, China assesses that other areas of African governance, stability, and security will eventually develop. This study then assessed the RAF Strategy and alternative, related, and competing forms of foreign policy by evaluation criteria established by OECD/DAC and modified to aptly measure foreign policy. This evaluation revealed that of the policies assessed, the RAF Strategy holds the greatest potential for success over the long-term. Finally, given that this research established the link between the RAF Strategy and imperialism, it made relevant recommendations concerning the implementation of the RAF concept, on the basis of associated lessons learned from historical imperialism.

Despite the negative connotation of imperialism, the RAF strategy holds the potential to be an overwhelmingly positive approach to foreign policy for both the U.S. and its partner nations. Ultimately, the RAF strategy centers on the individual soldier and empowers them to represent the U.S. at the sharp end of the strategy. How these soldiers interact with and are perceived by the host nation people and indigenous forces will be the distinguishing factor tied to the primary research question, "Is the U.S. Army's Regionally Aligned Force Strategy a modern form of imperialism?" The U.S. Army's RAF Strategy is a dynamic way to maintain global influence in pursuit of U.S. interests at



a time of budget and manpower paucity. As the strategy continues to evolve and develop, it is important to be thoughtful about the future as stated by the current Chief of Staff,

United States Army:

“There are many people that believe that through technology advancement, we can solve all of the issues of warfare. I absolutely reject that concept. . . . Human interaction in a complex environment is key to our success in the future.”

— General Raymond Odierno, speech given at the 2013 AUSA Meeting

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